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## Afloat in a Tiger's Den;

THE WRECK OF THE  
MENAGERIE SHIP.  
or,

By ROGER STARBUCK.





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# Afloat in a Tiger's Den;

## OR,

### The Wreck of the Menagerie Ship.

By ROGER STARBUCK,

Author of "The Magic Island; or, The Cruise of the Black Frigate," "The Lost Diamond Ship," etc.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### ALIVE OR DEAD?

"Oh, Ben! what are you doing up there? Down, for your life!"

"I'm going to fasten a signal to the top of the pole, and Eva will see it and come back to me."

"But the pole will not bear your weight! Already it is swaying. Come, Ben—come down!"

The last speaker was Tom Trailer—a bright looking boy of fifteen.

The person he addressed was his brother Ben, four years older.

The brothers were orphans, who had lived together for a year in a small frame house, then on the New York side of the Hudson, a few miles from the city.

This house they had inherited from their father, who had been a sea captain.

The dwelling contained only four rooms, but it was tight and comfortable.

In the front yard there stood a slender pole about twenty feet high, on top of which was fastened a miniature full-rigged ship.

As the pole had stood there for years, it was now somewhat weakened—unfit to bear the weight of a youth like Ben Trailer.

In fact, Ben would not have thought of climbing it had not his brain been turned by a fever, from which he had not yet entirely recovered.

He imagined he was on the coast of Indostan, where four years previously his adopted sister, Eva—a little girl of ten—to whom he was much attached, had wandered off, while under his care, and been lost.

It happened while his father's ship, the Sea Witch, lay becalmed off that far away coast near the sea-port town of Mangalore.

Eva, who, with Ben, had accompanied her adopted father on the voyage, saw some beautiful flowers on a hillside just beyond the shore, and said she would like to go and pick them.

"Down with the gig, Ben, and row Eva to land," said the boy's father. "You better take your gun along. Be careful, now. Remember, the girl is under your care. Bring her back as soon as she has gathered the flowers."

Ben promised to keep a good watch of his little charge.

When, at length, he was ashore with her, he followed her closely as she ran, laughing, among the flowers.

Suddenly he heard a croaking noise, and saw a wild turkey at the base of the hill.

He could not resist the temptation for a shot.

As the turkey went skimming along he fired and missed.

His gun was a double-barreled one.

He ran down the hill a few paces and fired again.

The turkey then disappeared in a clump of shrubbery.

Ben, believing he had hit the bird, went to search for it.

All at once he heard a scream above him.

He looked up, remembering he had left Eva on top of the hill.

She was no longer there!

The boy ran to the summit of the elevation.

The other side of it was very steep.

It was evident that Eva had fallen and rolled into a jungle, thirty feet below.

Ben descended into the jungle, but he looked in vain for the girl.

Half maddened by the thought that she had been lost by his not keeping a proper watch of her, he ran hither and thither, vainly calling her by name.

Days passed.

Ben and his father searched far and near for Eva, but still without success.

At length the tracks of a wolf were seen, and the shreds of Eva's little apron were discovered on a trampled shrub.

The captain then gave the girl up as lost and returned to his ship.

But Ben refused to believe, despite these terrible, significant signs, that his little sister had been dragged off and devoured by a wolf.

He had planted a signal on the hill from which she had disappeared, thinking she might see it and come back.

To hamper him his father remained off the coast for a month, while Ben, with a party of sailors, still roamed about in his useless search.

At last he came back to the vessel almost broken-hearted.

He was changed from a gay to a melancholy boy, for he could never forget that, had he taken proper care of Eva, had not he left her to shoot the bird, she would not have been lost.

He remained with his father until he died at sea. Then he returned home to dwell in the little house on the Hudson with his young brother Tom, who had remained in the care of a relative.

Tom now was employed in a lawyer's office, and was obliged to go to the city every morning.

It was his on return one day, while his brother was ill, that he found him as already described climbing the dangerous pole in the front yard.

"Don't be afraid!" Ben called out. "I know what I am about!"

As he spoke he arrived near the top of the pole, and proceeded to attach his kerchief to the masts of the little ship there.

"There!" he cried. "Eva ought to see that signal! She will see it, and return to us!"

But scarce had these words been uttered when a cracking sound was heard.

The lofty pole, with Ben clinging near the top, was falling.

It had broken off close to the surface of the ground.

Tom seized it, and using all his strength tried to prevent it from going, while he called out for assistance.

Before the neighbors who heard him could arrive the pole fell, and Tom, with his arm badly sprained, went down with it.

The top of the pole struck a hillock, and against the latter poor Ben was dashed.

He was almost unconscious, and the neighbors bore him into the house.

One of them went for a doctor.

When the latter arrived he said Ben was severely hurt, and that it was doubtful if he would recover.

His head had slantingly struck the rock, and his brain was badly injured.

He kept raving about the lost Eva, wildly reproaching himself for not having taken proper care of her.

On the second day after the accident, while he was going on this way, there came a knock at the door. An old aunt, who kept house for the brothers, opened the door, to see a strange-looking person before her. He was a boy of about seventeen, wearing the garb of a sailor.

His skin was nearly as dark as a mulatto's, he had a pair of wild, black eyes, and his slender form seemed as lithe and active as a serpent's.

"Cap'n Trailer living here?" he inquired, in broken English. "Me want to see him."

"The captain is dead. His son is here."

"Son do if fadder gone."

"Let him come in!" called Tom, from the room where he sat by his suffering brother's couch.

The boy on being admitted bowed low.

"You Cap'n Trailer's son?" he said.

"Yes," answered Tom.



Ben raised himself on his elbow and glared at the visitor, as he was invited to seat himself.

"Me come 'bout lost girl—little one with bright face and diamond eye, you call Eva."

"I told you she would come back to us!" cried Ben. "This is a Hindoo boy, and he has brought Eva back."

"No," answered the coolie, shaking his head. "Me no bringee back, but me have news of girl."

"You have news of Eva?" cried Tom in surprise. "You don't mean to say she is alive?"

"Listen to Jan, the coolie. He will tell you what he knows," answered the visitor.

"When he was little, a juggler made a slave of him. He live in village with juggler. One day a magician pass through village holding a little girl by the hand. Me hear what him say to juggler—how see girl roll down hill in jungle, and then lose her way—how him follow behind her, and see wolf come to attack girl. Then how him save from wolf. Then how him take girl away, first making her go sleep by giving garva berry to eat. How him know girl's name was Eva, and she from ship off coast, because while him hid with her in hollow, him heard fadder and brudder come to look for her and pass close to him calling her name. Magician keep her. Him want to make use of her when him go around to perform."

"And where is she now?" inquired Tom.

"Don't know. Magician travel much, and Jan never see again. But Jan's soul is good. He not rest till he tell fadder or brudder what he been see, and let them know that girl not been eat by wolves."

"She lives! she lives!" cried Ben, wildly. "Come, Tom, come with me, and we will go to look for her. She was left in my care, and I must find her."

"Compose yourself, Ben. When you get well, I will go with you to hunt for Eva."

"Good! good! Ho! ho! I shall get well fast enough now!"

A few minutes later the doctor came in, and was surprised by a marked improvement in the invalid's condition.

In fact, the news just brought by the coolie boy about Eva, had proved more beneficial to Ben than any medicine the physician could give him.

At last the boy fell into a deep, quiet sleep.

Leaving the old house-keeper in the room, Tom went out on the piazza with the coolie, as the doctor drove away in his carriage.

"You are a sailor, then," he said to Jan. "How did you contrive to ship?"

"Me run away from juggler. Him great man. Him swallow fire, him charm serpents. Make many strange things happen. But him not could catch Jan. Jan is as swift as the serpent. Him glide off like a streak of light in the mist, and go where the waves roar on the shore. Waves throw up white arms, and say to Jan: 'Go far away on ship—go Jan, where juggler not can bring back. Bumby me see ship. Me signal her, and sailor come in boat and take me aboard.'"

"What ship was it?" inquired Tom.

"She was the JAPAN, bound for New York. There was a sailor aboard who been know Captain Trailer. He tell me where he live. But dis sailor take sick and die before ship get to New York. Me get leave from cap'n of Japan to go ashore. Me came here, and now Jan has told you all, and his words are as clear as the stars, and as true as that Jan has empty stomachum."

As he spoke the coolie placed both hands on his stomach.

Tom smiled.

He at once requested his aunt to prepare dinner.

She soon had an excellent repast on the table, and Jan did full justice to the meal.

"What is the name of your captain?" inquired Tom, when he had finished.

"Cap'n Chub. Him good sailor. Steer ship steady through rocks and reefs when the night was black as the raven's feather. Him give good 'grub' too," added Jan, thoughtfully.

"I have heard my father speak of a Captain John Chub," said Tom. "Probably he was one of father's old friends. How long will your ship remain in port?"

"Two month—so me hear—then sail for Mangalore."

"Then you will probably see my brother Ben and me aboard. We will sail in that ship for Mangalore, to commence our search for Eva," said Tom.

"Hope you find little diamond eye. But the country there is full of perils. You may die before you find her."

Soon after, the coolie departed.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE EVIL PLOTTERS.

Six weeks after the coolie boy Jan had brought the news about Eva, Ben had fully regained his health.

Of a strong, vigorous constitution, he rapidly gathered in his lost strength. He and Tom visited Captain Chub, who proved to be one of their father's former nautical friends.

On hearing of Ben's intention, he offered him the berth of second mate aboard his vessel, from New York to Mangalore, at which latter place the youth would leave him to commence the search for his sister.

Ben accepted the offer, while Tom consented to help write out the captain's log and keep his accounts. The captain told him he might also assist in handling the sails aloft, when so disposed.

On a bright July morning the ship plunged her bows into the Atlantic.

The two brothers who had come aboard with their trunks, on the previous day, stood by the weather-rail aft.

"What do you think of the ship?" inquired Tom.

"A fine craft, and a swift sailer. I hope for favorable winds. You can guess of my impatience to search for Eva, who was lost through my carelessness."

"Yes, Ben, I can understand your feelings. I hope we may have a quick passage, and that nothing will happen to balk us."

Ben nodded as he looked thoughtfully toward the group of men forward and in the waist.

His previous sea-experience with his father showed him that some of the hands were what are termed "hard characters."

There was one big, swaggering fellow who talked very loud, and laughed harshly as he worked at stowing the cable. Jan, the coolie, was near him, coiling a rope.

As he was doing this, one of the coils struck the big sailor's leg a smart blow.

"Sorry," said the boy, quickly. "It was accidentum."

"For all that," roared the other, savagely, laughing at his own attempt at wit—"I'm going to 'resent um.'"

So saying, and while most of the other men grinned, he caught Jan by the scruff of the neck, and was about to apply a rope's end to his back, when the coolie, with a serpentine twist of his lithe form and a sudden jerk, broke away from him.

Placing his back against the rail, he drew his sheath-knife from his belt.

"You one big whale!" he cried. "Jan one little eel. But, lookout, you, for Jan's teeth are sharp."

"Ho! Ho!" shouted the big sailor, "hear the little fool. Put down that knife," he added. "I am going to make you dance to the tune of this rope's end."

"That's right, Juggles, give it to the coolie, and make him dance a jig for us!" cried one of the men.

Ben, who, as second officer, was superintending the work in the waist, now felt called on to interfere.

"Back to your work, there, Juggles!" he cried. "You, Jan, put up your knife."

The youth sprang into the waist as he spoke, and Juggles momentarily drew back as he was confronted by the young officer's vigorous form and flashing eyes.

"The little imp of a coolie was careless and struck me with the rope he was coiling," said Juggles, sullenly. "I hope, sir, you'll not balk me of my revenge—leastaways, I hope you'll have him flogged."

"Ay, ay, ay!" was echoed among the men.

"Why you no like Jan? What has Jan done to you?" cried the coolie. "He is as innocent of meaning harm as an infant born at the new moon-time. All Jap asks is to be left alone to do his duty like a man and to eat his allowance."

At this drop of Jan's, as usual, from poetry to commonplace, all the sailors laughed.

"This is a harmless boy, men," said Ben. "I am as puzzled as he is to know what you have against him."

"He is a coolie. They're all snaky and treach'rous!" cried Juggles.

"That's jest it, mate!" cried one of the others, and the rest nodded approvingly.

"They differ in character, like other people," answered Ben.

"Some bad—some good. Understand now?" he added, decidedly, "that if I can help it, this boy shall not be harmed or imposed upon."

"Any coolie ought to be treated like a dog," said Juggles.

"Ay, ay, ay!" accorded his shipmates.

"This boy shall not be," firmly replied the young second mate. "I mean to protect him as far as I can."

Juggles muttered something to himself and resumed his work.

All the other men did the same, but there were scowling glances directed aft.

There could be no doubt that Ben, for his interference in the coolie's behalf, had drawn upon himself the ill-will of most of the crew.

That same day, when it was his watch below, Jan was pounced upon by Juggles, who threw him down, and grasping him by the throat, said he would choke him to death.

The brute, who was half drunk, would actually have carried out his intention but for something which suddenly entered his forearm, inflicting terrible pain.

It was the point of a stiletto of the finest steel, as sharp as a needle, which Jan had drawn from his breast pocket unseen.

Juggles gave a groan and drew back, grasping his hurt arm.

Then there were simultaneous yells of rage from all his white shipmates.

A fierce set they were, consisting of "beach-comers," who are often evil, unprincipled men.

There were twenty of them in all, and they called themselves the "beach gang."

The captain having to be absent in port, had left the shipping of his crew to an agent, who had been careless as to the kind of people he selected, so long as they were able seamen.

The red faces, the bloodshot eyes and the wolfish expressions of these fellows, clad in rough jumpers, guernseys, and patched blue and red shirts, gave them a savage appearance.

"The coolie dog uses a knife! Down with him!" roared one.



"Ay!" shouted another. "On deck and overboard with him!"

Then there was a simultaneous rush for the boy.

But Jan got upon one of the fore-castle chests. Placing his back against a bunk, he flourished his dirk, and cried:

"Jan wants to hurt no man. But he must defend himself. Even the dumb rock throws back the wave that strikes it. Now listen to the words of Jan. He will strike the first man that lays a hand on him as he would a pig!"

The flashing eyes and menacing attitude of the young coolie, who showed in every look that he meant what he said, brought his would-be assailants to a halt.

At the same moment, down into the fore-castle came the captain and Ben Trailer.

"What's the trouble here?" inquired the latter. "Why don't you leave that boy alone?" he added, looking toward the coolie.

"He drew a knife on us! He has stabbed Juggles," said one of the crew.

"See here, Jan!" cried the captain, sternly. "It is against the rules for any man to carry a dirk aboard my ship. Give me that weapon."

Jan surrendered the dirk.

"Me no have dirk before," he said. "Me buy in New York when me see crew going to be 'beach-comers.' Some 'beach-comers' are bad, and Jan wanted to be prepared."

"Seize him up in the rigging, captain, and flog the life out of him!" cried Juggles. "See there!" and he held out his stabbed arm.

"Why did you stab this man?" inquired the captain.

"Because he going to choke Jan to death," replied the boy.

"Well, in future there shall be no more trouble of this kind. I will put you aft, in place of the cabin boy there, and send him forward."

"Thank!" answered the coolie. "You will find Jan as true to his duty as the sun to the rising in the east. Bright and clean will Jan keep the dish, the pan, and the coffee pot."

A rude guffaw broke from the men at this. Even the captain smiled.

"I hope, sir, you'll flog him first," said Juggles. "I ought to have my revenge."

"No," was the answer. "You require no revenge. The boy simply defended himself, though it was unlawful for him to carry a dirk."

The men all looked sullen.

But they said no more, as Jan followed the captain and Ben on deck.

Often after that they might have been seen gathered in groups forward conversing in low voices.

Days passed, however, without any further trouble.

The truth was that, though the men in reality were hatching a plan of revenge with Juggles as the intended ringleader, they were in no hurry to act.

A liberal allowance of food and kindly treatment kept even these evil men of the beach-gang in check.

Just at dusk one day, a few weeks after the ship had passed round the Cape of Good Hope, a whale ship—the *St. George* by name—was spoken.

Through his trumpet the captain inquired of Chub if he had seen either a struck whale or a lost boat?

"Neither," was the reply.

"God knows what's become of them, then. I have lost a boat's crew, sir. They struck a whale in a fog two days ago and I have seen nothing of them or the whale since."

As the whale ship forged on, Jan, who stood amidships, overheard Juggles say significantly to his companions:

"There are other ways of men's losing their lives than by whales!"

The coolie's suspicions were aroused.

After dark he glided, serpent-like, behind the foremast.

Finally, he saw all the beach-gang providing themselves with hand-spikes and crowbars.

"The second mate has the watch," said Juggles to his companions.

"I will strike him down. The rest of you will then make a rush for the steerage and the cabin. Remember our enemies, besides the captain and his mates, are the boatswain, the carpenter and the steward."

"We are to make cold meat of 'em all—en, boys?" said another.

"Of course! of course!" was the simultaneous answer.

"And how about the swag?" inquired one of the men.

"There's not much," said Juggles. "Of course this affair is for revenge, to pay off the captain for his being partial like to that dog of a coolie."

"But there is swag, too, and we must have some of it," said the other.

"What there is—probably a thousand dollars—will be equally divided. As to the cargo—mostly casks of paraffine oil and gas—that will have to go with the ship, when we set her on fire."

Jan waited to hear no more.

He crept swiftly away, keeping in the shadow of the galley to notify Ben of what he had heard.

Suddenly he received on the head a blow that laid him senseless.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE WORK OF THE BEACH-GANG.

BEN TRAILER, unconscious of the evil plans of the men, stood by the weather-rail.

Presently up came his brother Tom.

"I don't know why it was, Ben," he said, "but somehow, I could not sleep, so I have come to have a talk with you. The captain and the first and third mates are sound asleep—I heard them snore as I passed their rooms."

"I have seldom slept soundly," said Ben, "since Eva was lost."

"You allow that affair to have too much weight with you. Though I dare say I would have felt the same, under similar circumstances."

"Ay, the girl was left in my care. God grant that we may find her."

"I hope we may," said Tom, earnestly. "But has it not seemed to you that it is a wild undertaking? Indostan is a large country and how know we even that the lost girl is there now? Many things may have happened, and—"

There was a dull thud as something dark descended on the rail, just missing Ben's head, owing to his having turned it aside.

The next moment the afterdeck was alive with fierce men.

"This way, some of you!" said Juggles. "The rest into the cabin. Don't leave one of the accursed officers alive!"

As he spoke he raised his crowbar for a second blow—aiming it at Ben's head.

"Look out, there, below!" shouted Ben Trailer, in a stentorian voice.

Both he and Tom sprang aside, as Juggles dealt his blow.

The crowbar again struck the rail, and ere the brute could raise it, Ben planted a blow with his clenched fist, against the man's temple, felling him senseless to the deck.

Several of the sailors came rushing toward him.

One of them struck at Tom with an ax.

The blade would have crashed through the boy's skull, had not Ben knocked the implement from the fallen Juggles.

Tom picked up the ax, and now the two brothers, with their backs to the rail, endeavored to defend themselves from the half dozen desperate fellows who assailed them.

Meanwhile they could hear the sound of blows in the cabin, together with the noise of a struggle.

From the steerage came the voice of the carpenter, begging for mercy until his voice fell away in a dying gasp.

The hoarse tones of the boatswain, who evidently was engaged in a desperate combat with his assailants, was heard for a few moments.

Then, blended with the sound of a heavy blow, his voice was smothered in a stifled groan.

Meanwhile, with the crowbar and the ax, Tom and Ben contrived to keep their adversaries back.

Presently, however, three of them got over on the outside of the ship for the purpose of attacking them in the rear.

Then they retreated from the rail, and while still defending themselves, they stumbled over a coil of rope near the companionway, and fell backward down the cabin stairs.

They clutched the railing as they went, and were not much hurt.

As they rose, they saw the dead bodies of the captain, steward, and first and third mates lying, frightfully hacked, a few paces from them.

All of the murderous gang below had entered the captain's room and were evidently searching for the plunder.

Thus the brothers were not seen by them, but those above were coming toward them down the companionway.

"Quick! blow out the light!" said Ben, in a low voice to Tom, who stood close to the large swinging lantern, by which the cabin was lighted.

Tom at once put out the light and all was darkness.

"Follow me. We will hide in the pantry for the present," added Ben.

The brothers soon reached the pantry and closed its small door.

Their pursuers had not seen which way they went in the gloom, and it chanced that they ran toward the apartment in which were their confederates.

"Now, Tom, quick! for the deck!" whispered Ben.

The brothers emerged noiselessly from the pantry and mounted to the deck.

The only persons there now were the man at the wheel and the still senseless Juggles. The former saw them and drew his knife, but before he could use it or give the alarm Ben pounced upon him, knocking him senseless with a blow from the crowbar.

Then the youth ran to the companion-door and closed it, fastening it on the outside.

"They will quickly beat it open," said Tom.

"I know that. We must leave the ship. That is the only chance for us to save our lives."

As he spoke he felt a hand on his shoulder and turned quickly.

Then he saw before him the gleaming black eyes and slender form of the coolie, Jan.

"Me guess what happen. Men killee cap'n and officers, eh?"

"Yes, but how came you here? Where have you been all this time?"

Jan informed him of what he had heard the plotters say, while he was crouched behind the foremast.

"Then me go creep aft to tell you," he continued, "when some one strike me on head and me know no more until just now. Man who strike must have been one of the gang on watch, 'midships.'"

"Ay, very likely. It's a wonder he did not finish you."

"Him could not. When strike me, him slip, fall and strike head against ringbolt, and him still senseless."



"Come, there is no time to lose," said Ben. "We must leave the ship."

Even as he spoke, some of the men were heard pounding at the companion-door.

"Best go in dingey—no?" said Jan.

"Yes, that can be the soonest lowered."

The three ran to the dingey, and having fastened a rope to the bow, they cast it clear of the davits.

The ship, with no man at the wheel, had swung up into the wind, with all her sails aback, so that the boys had no trouble in entering the boat.

They shoved off, and Ben sculled the boat away from the vessel.

At the same moment they heard the shouts of rage that broke from their enemies on discovering their escape.

The gang had broken down the companion-door, and were now on deck.

Fortunately, the night was dark and misty.

Otherwise the beach-comers would probably have started in pursuit of them.

"A sad business this," said Ben—"all our friends killed, and we adrift in a small boat, without food or water."

"Are we far from land?" inquired Tom.

"The Laccadive Islands, off the coast of Indostan are, by the captain's last reckoning, about a hundred miles to the eastward of us."

"Boat get there in few days," said Jan, hopefully.

"We cannot be sure of that. We know not what may happen. Storms may drive us off our course."

"Ay, the wind is against us now," said Tom.

He and the coolie, assisted by Ben, who continued to scull, were soon pulling very hard at the oars to get as far as possible from the ship.

But the wind presently blew stronger, and finally there came up a squall which snapped their oars in twain and drove them back in the direction they had come.

They had some difficulty in keeping the boat from swamping.

The squall was not of long duration.

Just as it passed away, Jan pointed out something dark looming through the gloom, just to windward of them.

"Halloa!" said Ben, "it is the ship! We have been carried by the squall to leeward of her."

"She is heading toward us," said Tom, "is she not?"

"No," said Ben, "she is hove to! Hark!"

The sound of boats being lowered was heard.

A minute later, with a lantern in each, they were seen heading to windward.

"What can that mean?" cried Ben. "The beach-gang must have left the ship."

He had scarcely spoken when a column of flame was seen to rise from the vessel's main hatchway.

"Good God! they have set fire to the ship!" cried Tom.

"Ay, the rascals have plundered her, and have thought it best to leave her," said Ben. "Evidently they feared we might fall in with some other craft and tell tales."

"And so thought it best to destroy all trace of the vessel," added Tom.

"Remember the paraffine oil and gasoline aboard!" said Ben. "She will soon blow up."

"If blow up, we too much near her," said Jan, "and may be killed."

"We have no oars, and so we will have to run the risk!" cried Ben.

The flames spread rapidly.

They threw a broad gleam far and near, and, as the mist had cleared, the evil beach-gang now saw the boys.

They set up a wild shout and stopped pulling, intending to head for the lads and capture them after the ship should have blown up.

They had not long to wait.

Suddenly a great column of flame shot up from the vessel, until it seemed to touch the very skies.

Then, with a roar like that of a thunderbolt, the fragments of the ship were sent flying through the air in all directions.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A SEA OF FIRE.

THE three occupants of the dingey looked up, watching the blazing pieces of wood and the whizzing bolts and bars of iron that were coming down through the air in a perfect shower.

All about the young sailors they fell, but though they struck the water perilously near them, the boys were not touched by one of the fallen fragments.

"We have escaped that danger," said Ben, "but the beach-gang have seen us."

"Ay, and here they come after us!" cried Tom, as the boats were seen heading toward them.

"They not get us—see!" cried Jan, pointing toward the spot where the vessel had blown up.

These sheets of rolling flame had spread out far along the sea, between them and their enemies.

It was the gasoline and paraffine oil, which had been spilled out upon the waters by the explosion, and had taken fire.

Far along the sea streamed the rolling flames.

A strong wind now was blowing, and the floating fire was swept rapidly toward the boat.

"We are doomed!" cried Tom. "Without oars or sail, how are we to escape the flames?"

"Ay, they will soon be upon us," said Ben.

Jan took off his jacket, cap and shoes.

"Me will save," he cried. "Jan can fly through the waves like the arrow-fish. He can swim the waters as swift as the shadow of a cloud. Leave all to Jan. He will save your bacon."

Despite their great peril the brothers could not help smiling.

Into the sea dropped the coolie, and seizing the stem of the boat, he shoved it rapidly along.

Nevertheless the fire continued to gain.

On it came, a broad belt of hissing flame.

Ben was soon in the sea, alongside of Jan.

By their united efforts the boys increased the speed of the dingey.

But the fire was now not more than fifteen fathoms from the boat.

Suddenly, Tom wet his hand in the water and held it up.

"Thank God!" he cried, "the wind is changing. But it is doing so slowly. If the boat could be kept away from the fire a little longer, we would escape."

The light from the flames streamed far along the water ahead of the boat.

Looking that way, Tom descried several oars floating on the surface.

They were about ten fathoms from the dingey.

"If we can pick up those oars in time, we are saved!" cried Tom.

But the wind increased, and the fire came on yet more swiftly.

It was now so close to the boat that there was no chance of the latter's escaping it.

The wind by this time had changed, so that the outer edge of the belt of flame would strike the dingey diagonally.

The exhausted swimmers could do no more.

A great burning wave came rolling towards them.

"Down, under water for life!" screamed Jan, "and stay under as long as you can!"

Tom, who had divested himself of his jacket, cap and shoes, dove just as the flames reached the boat.

So narrow was his escape that the fire singed his hair.

Ben and Jan had already allowed themselves to sink beneath the surface.

The three boys remained under water as long as they could hold their breath.

When they rose to the surface, the flames were only a few feet from them sweeping along at right angles to the boat.

But the latter was now on fire. The light planks were all ablaze, and soon the boat was burned to cinders.

"What shall we do now?" cried Tom.

"There are the oars ahead," said Ben. "We can partly support ourselves by them."

The three swam on, and presently each had grasped an oar.

From their position they could see the beach-gang pulling off.

They had evidently concluded that the boys had perished.

A slight smoke upon the water concealed the heads of the swimmers from their view.

The three looked about them for some spar or other fragment of the ship, from which they might obtain a better support than that afforded by the oars.

But they looked in vain.

The floating fire had destroyed every vestige of the craft except the oars which had been hurled beyond its reach.

There they were, half exhausted, adrift upon the wide ocean, with no land nearer than a hundred miles from their position.

Hours passed, and they still clung to the oars.

Darkness was about them.

The blazing oil, swept far away from them, had burned out.

Gradually the light of dawn stole about them.

They were some distance apart from each other, but within hail.

The morning mist had cleared, and they looked for a sail.

There was none in sight.

Something, however, they saw not far ahead of them, about which a great flock of birds was hovering.

"That is a dead whale!" shouted Ben to Tom.

The three, exhausted though they were, contrived to push their oars along toward the object.

They were finally close to it.

It proved to be a sperm whale, which had evidently but lately died.

There were two irons in its body, and coil upon coil of whaling line was entangled about its great form.

Suddenly Tom ceased his exertions. The water was fairly black with huge sharks, which were darting at and about the monster. Some of these ferocious creatures had obtained morsels from it, and were seen devouring their oily food.

Others clung to it with their fangs, striving to bite chunks from its great body.

"Don't be afraid!" cried Jan to Tom. "Sharks not hurt you while they got whale to feed on."

Thus encouraged, Tom swam on, and, with his companions, he was finally upon that part of the whale that projected from the water, holding on to the irons which had been driven deep into the monster.

"Halloa! What is that?" suddenly inquired Tom, pointing down toward the edge of something protruding from under the whale's body, beneath the sea.

Jan stooped to his knees and peered down into the water.

"A boat! a boat!" he cried.

"It must be a whale boat, then," said Ben, "and if we can only get it up, we can have the use of it."



"But the boat is probably stoven?" said Tom.

"What me can see is not stove," said Jan.

"I wish we could only get the boat up to the surface," said Tom.

Then the three boys looked at each other.

Even Jan shrugged his shoulders at the idea of diving down among the sharks to cut away the sunken boat from the entangling coils of line that held it to the whale.

"Well, Jan, what do you say?" inquired Ben. "It would be of great service to us—that boat—if it is not stoven."

"Ay," said Tom. "This is evidently the whale that was struck by the boat's crew of the whaler we spoke, and the boat we see must be the one he spoke of as being lost. Could we make use of that boat we might stand a chance of falling in with the whale ship."

Jan compressed his lips, and his black eyes flashed.

"May the great Niwani (Hindoo god) help Jan. Jan will make the dive, and Niwani will turn the souls of the pariahs and other bad people which are in the sharks, away from doing evil to the coolie boy. Success to Jan! If he get up the boat, he and his two friends may meet the whale ship, and at last have their empty stomachs filled with salt junk and hard tack."

So saying, the brave boy drew his sheath-knife and dove toward the boat.

There was a sudden rush among the disturbed sharks, and their dark bodies closed so thickly over his form that for some seconds he could not be seen by the two watchers above.

Suddenly the boat rose bottom up to the surface, but Jan was not visible.

Had he perished?

"He has been caught by the sharks!" cried Ben.

"Ay, he is lost, as I thought he would be," said Tom.

## CHAPTER V.

### IN PERIL ASHORE.

SCARCELY had Tom spoken, when up popped the head of Jan from under the boat.

"All right," he said. "Niwani keep Jan. Shark no touch him. But look in boat. Niwani no has helped the man there."

With a quick movement he righted the boat, when the boys uttered a cry of horror.

Jammed under one of the thwarts, and held there by coils of line about him, was the body of a dead whaleman.

It was that of a Kanaka.

His long, black hair clung to his livid cheeks, and his head being turned upward, his glazed, bulging eyes were visible to the spectators.

It was a ghastly sight.

The fast boat when close to the whale for the lancing, had evidently been overturned, and all the crew spilled out except this man, who had been caught by the turns of the line.

The boat had then been drawn down under the monster's body by the fouling of the line.

The coolie now got into the boat.

With his knife he severed the turn of the line that held the corpse.

Then his companions entered the light craft, and with their assistance the body was launched overboard.

"The rest of the crew must also have been lost," said Ben.

"Yes, all gone."

The boat, like all whale-boats, was sharp at both ends.

There were several lances in it fast to the gunwale.

There was also a boat-keg there, which had been caught and held by the line, and which, on being examined, was found to contain a couple of quarts of fresh water.

A small bag of soaked sea-biscuits, together with some boiled pork and salt junk, were also found wedged in the after part.

The boys could account for this provision having escaped the sharks only by the greater temptation offered by the dead whale.

Though soaked almost to a pulp the sea-biscuits were greedily partaken of, and the remainder carefully preserved by the hungry castaways.

The pork and salt junk seemed delicious to the half-starved trio.

After they had satisfied their appetites, there was enough of the provisions left to last them several days.

With their oars, which were found to fit the rowlocks of the whale boat well enough to be made use of, the three now headed the boat away from the whale, Ben and Jan pulling, and Tom using the long steering oar, which had remained fast to the loggerhead by a turn of line caught about the handle.

Shaping his course by the sun, Ben had the boat directed to the north and east.

A good lookout was kept for the whale ship, but as yet there was no sign of her.

At night the boys took turns at sleeping and watching.

Fortunately they had good weather, so that they were enabled to obtain refreshing naps.

On the second day after leaving the whale, they sighted the lofty summits of the Ghauts' Mountains, on the west coast of Indostan, far in the distance.

By this time their provisions and fresh water were gone.

They hoped to reach some settlement on the coast, where they could obtain more food.

Late in the afternoon they found themselves near the coast.

But this part was a wild, uninhabited region.

"Further south we reach Mangalore," said the coolie, "where we find plenty of eat and plenty ships."

The boat was headed south, but all at once there was a crash as it struck a sunken rock.

The light planks split open and the craft rapidly filled.

It was now of no further use.

"We will have to go ashore," said Ben, "and try to reach Mangalore on foot."

Each of the boys taking a lance waded ashore.

They found themselves on a narrow strip of beach, with lofty rocks towering up in the midst of a thick forest.

They discovered a ravine among the rocks, through which they proceeded toward the interior.

Presently their path was obstructed by rugged masses which they were obliged to climb.

For hours they kept on through the difficult forest-covered passes of the mountains.

Jan had never before been in this part of the country, but he was nevertheless a valuable guide.

By instinct he seemed to know in the gathering darkness, when they were on the verge of some lofty precipice, with the treacherous chasm before it concealed by leaves and twigs, that seemed to grow from the soil, but which were the tops of the numerous teak and sacoo trees abounding in this place.

Thoroughly exhausted the wanderers finally paused for rest and shelter in a hollow formed by an overhanging rock.

Tom and Ben lay down and slumbered soundly, while the coolie kept watch.

They had slept for several hours when they were awakened by the most horrible shrieks and wails resounding through the forest.

They sprang to their feet much startled, and saw a number of dim forms scrambling about, chattering and screeching among the branches of the trees.

Jan, however, stood composedly leaning on the lance which he had brought from the whale boat.

"What on earth is that horrible noise?" inquired Tom.

"Jackal," answered the coolie, his white teeth showing through the gloom as he smiled. "Other animals you hear screech up among trees are orang-outangs. Jackal frighten them."

"A jackal is a sort of wolf, I believe," said Ben. "Might not the jackals we hear come this way?"

"Don't know. If they come, we quick can kill with lances. Don't think come this way."

As he spoke a moving sort of noise, followed by the rustling of shrubbery, was heard a few paces off.

Then a pair of blue eyes suddenly were seen peering through the darkness, a few feet distant.

"It is some person in distress," said Tom.

As he spoke he advanced toward the eyes.

He moved so quickly that he was close to them, ere Jan's warning cry broke upon his ears.

"Come back! come back! That is not man—it is a hyena!"

At the same moment a dark form came leaping toward the boy from the shrubbery which had concealed it.

A pair of strong paws struck his shoulders, knocking him down. He saw the outline of the brute's hideous form and the gleam of its sharp fangs, as the latter were about to fasten upon his throat.

He had left his lance in the hollow he had quitted.

But he drew his sheath-knife and struck at the neck of the beast.

The animal caught the blade in its strong teeth, and flung the knife from it.

In another second Tom would have been torn to death by the fangs of the brute but for Jan, who plunged his lance deep into the monster's breast.

The creature strove to climb up the lance-pole and held on to it, so that Jan could not withdraw it.

But Ben, coming up with his lance, churned the beast's body with it, until, with a farewell moan, it dropped apparently dead, near the edge of the steep rock.

"A narrow escape," said Tom. "I must say I do not like this country, if we are to meet with such dangers."

"We must risk them for the sake of the girl we are looking for," said Ben. "Eva must be found. I can never rest till I find her."

During the remainder of the night, the horrible cries of the jackals and other wild beasts, heard in the distance, hindered the brothers from sleeping soundly.

The coolie, however, when it came his turn, sank at once into a deep, refreshing slumber.

He had not slept long when Tom and Ben awoke him.

Attracted by the body of the hyena the jackals were approaching.

Presently the outlines of their forms and the gleam of their fiery eyes could be seen through the gloom.

It was then that the boys aroused Jan.

"Jackals no hurt us. They want hyena," said the coolie. "Jan will push hyena's body down the rock and then jackal go away from here after it."

As a portion of the animal's body hung over the rock, the coolie thought he could easily push it down the steep descent into the small valley, twenty feet below.

But as he shoved at the brute's form, the creature which, in reality, was not quite dead, suddenly made a snap at him, catching one of the legs of his trousers with its fangs.

Vainly did Jan struggle to release himself from the beast.

His position was an awkward one, hindering him from rising his lance with much effect.



As he strove to do so, it caught in a cleft of the rock and the handle snapped in twain.

The jackals, as if aware of his helpless situation, came rushing with their horrid shrieks and wails toward the hyena.

"Come, Tom, quick! Pick up your lance!" cried Ben. "We must go to the coolie's assistance."

So saying, he seized his own lance, and followed by his brother, ran toward the confused outlines of the jackals and Jan, indistinctly revealed through the gloom.

All at once a crashing noise was heard, and Jan disappeared.

The jackals, attacking the hyena, had caused it to fall over the edge of the rock and the coolie, still held by its fangs, had been drawn down with it.

## CHAPTER VI.

### BAD NEWS.

THE moment their intended prey disappeared from their sight the jackals scampered off.

"Poor Jan! I fear he is lost!" cried Tom.

"Ay. Even if he escaped death by his fall he will be torn to pieces by the wolves. They are probably making for the valley by some roundabout way."

"If we follow them we may reach Jan in time to rescue him," said Tom.

The brothers hurried on, keeping the outlines of the jackals' forms in view as long as possible.

But these finally vanished from their gaze, though they could still hear the horrible cries of the animals.

They soon found themselves in the midst of a thick jungle, which in the darkness seemed impenetrable.

While they were striving to extricate themselves from the tangled brushwood, they heard the piercing cries of some human being, with which were blended the growls and shrieks of the wolves.

"Too late!" said Ben. "We can do nothing for the poor coolie now. The jackals are upon him, and are probably devouring him, together with the hyena."

"But see there! What does that mean?" cried Tom, pointing to the gleam of a number of torches, which could be seen through openings among the rocks in the distance.

Then came the sounds of several shots, followed by shouts and the increased howling of the jackals, which, however, now seemed to recede.

A moment later a loud halloo reached the boys.

They answered the cry, knowing now that it came from some party of natives, the gleam of whose torches they could still see.

On their repeating their cries the torches drew nearer, and they could distinguish by the light the forms of a dozen natives and of two white men.

As the party came on, they saw to their great joy the person of Jan, the coolie.

His garments were torn, and he was somewhat scratched and bruised, but he seemed otherwise uninjured.

He soon entered the jungle with the other natives and ran up to the brothers.

"Jan, glad to see you again. He had hard fight with jackals. See!" And he held up his knife, the blade of which was broken off.

"Fall not hurt him much, for ground soft in valley. But he could not get away from hyena. Teeth close tight in pants, though hyena dead. Then wolves come up. They attack hyena and Jan, too. But Jan kill one, two, three, with knife. Knife broke, and coolie been eat up by jackals if Niwani not send party to help him. They come and shoot at wolves, and wolves run off."

"Yes, your friend, the coolie, had a narrow escape," said one of the white men who had just come up.

He was an active, shrewd-looking man of middle age, evidently an American, as was also his white companion. The two carried rifles, and each had a pistol and a long knife in the belt about his waist.

"I am very glad Jan was saved," said Ben. "Lucky it was for him, your coming up so unexpectedly. I little thought of meeting with white men in this wild region."

"This will explain our being here," said the man, taking out a large handbill, and holding it before Ben, in such a position that the light of the torches, carried by his swarthy Hindoo followers, fell upon the paper.

Ben read, printed in large letters on the bill:

### THE GREAT HARTFORD WILD BEAST SHOW.

LIONS, TIGERS, ELEPHANTS, HYENAS, ORANG-OUTANGS, BOAS, COBRAS, AND SEALS.

The Greatest Spectacle in the World.

The managers of the great Hartford menagerie have spared neither cost nor pains in obtaining the wild beasts and other curiosities, which will, in a few months, be ready for exhibition to the public. We have chartered a ship and sent out our agents to procure direct from the wilds of India, and thus add to our collection, a royal Bengal tiger, an elephant, a hyena, and a cobra, which will, etc., etc.

"I wish you success," said Ben, after he had read the bill.

"The coolie has told me your story," said the man. "You cannot do better than join our party."

"I am in search of a lost sister," replied Ben, "and so would not like to be diverted from my purpose."

"Lost here—in India?" said the showman, pricking up his ears.

"The coolie has told me nothing about that."

Ben explained in a few words.

As he proceeded with his narrative, the face of the showman became fairly luminous with delight.

When he had finished, he brought his hand down upon the boy's shoulder, and cried out:

"This is grand—this is glorious!"

"What do you mean, sir?" said Ben, indignantly. "I see nothing grand or glorious in losing an adopted sister!"

"You don't understand me, I perceive," said the showman. "It will be the making of her fortune and mine, too, if we find her! And we will find her—yes, as true as my name is John Button, we will find her. Just listen. How would this sound? An American girl lost, for four years, in the wilds of India, and lately found and restored to her friends, will also be on exhibition in this grand——"

"Enough!" cried Ben, angrily. "Do you suppose that, if I should find my sister, I would have her put on exhibition?"

But the luminous expression of Mr. Button's face did not abate.

"I meant no offense, my boy," he said. "Laying all interested motives aside, I am as anxious as you are to find this sister of yours. I will help you to the best of my ability if you will join our party. We will yet come to some arrangement about the girl, I doubt not, Mr. Romer," he added, in a whisper to his companion and assistant.

Then, turning to Ben, he continued:

"You could not do better than join us. We contemplate a wide range of the country in our hunt for a hyena, and at the same time we will prosecute the search for your adopted sister. We have excellent facilities, have guides, arms, ammunition and provisions. Our ship, the *Gladiator*, lies at anchor in the seaport of Mangalore to receive us whenever we are ready to return. Look at these natives," he added, pointing to the dusky group of twenty half-naked Hindoos armed with their spears and long knives. "They know every inch of the country, from Cape Comorin to Jagerat, and how know we that some one or more of them may not have seen your sister and may not be able to give us a clew even at this moment?"

Scarcely had he thus spoken when one of the group advanced.

"It is so. Listen to Ram Rone. He has seen the lost white girl!"

"You have seen her?" cried Ben, excitedly. "Where?—tell me where and when?"

"It was a year ago. Ram Rone has not seen her since. She was with the old magician, Sikhi, the serpent-charmer. They were going toward Calicut."

"We will find her! We will find her!" cried Mr. Button, confidently. "Ah! it is grand," he added, in a low voice to his assistant. "The magician has probably taught her the trick of charming serpents. She would prove a great card for our menagerie!"

"How know you she was my sister?" inquired the boy of the Hindoo.

"Sikhi is a great magician. He can tell what going to happen. We ask him where he get white girl, and he tell me. He say girl's brother come look for her, but he not give her up, unless brother give him a hundred gold rupees."

"Have you the money, my young friend?" inquired Mr. Button. "It is about \$700."

"I have that sum and more," said Ben. "I did not start on such a search unprovided. But I will force the rascal, if I find him, to give up my sister without paying a cent. He has stolen her, and has no claim upon her."

Here another one of the Hindoos stepped up and said, in a solemn voice:

"The American boy may never see his sister. Me saw magician and girl near Calicut. She had the gendchi fever, and it is a fever that almost always kills!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE OLD MAGICIAN.

THE Hindoo's dismal statement elicited a simultaneous cry of dismay from Ben and his brother.

But Mr. Button did not seem at all discouraged.

"Don't let this news trouble you, boys. Most of these magicians are skillful doctors, and it is likely your sister's health is now good. You must join us. Already I have had almost all the animals I want here in India conveyed aboard the ship. I now only require a hyena and a cobra. After obtaining the hyena and the serpent, we will devote ourselves to hunting for your sister."

The two boys, together with Jan, finally consented to join the party.

"We have missed our chance at capturing a hyena to-night," said Button. "We were after the one which was lately killed, and now the others, if there are any about, will be sure to keep shy of us. We will go to the village and rest until to-morrow."

After an hour's tramp through a dense forest, they reached a village, consisting of about twenty adobe-like structures, with palm-thatched roofs.

One of these huts was the showmen's quarters.

It contained a goodly assortment of spears, rifles, bamboo poles, and coils of strong ropes.

One of the Hindoos soon appeared with a repast, which he set before the party.

There were curry, venison, wild fowl, canned meats, and sea biscuits, of which the hungry castaways partook with a keen relish.

Then they lay down on comfortable mats and sank into a deep slumber, from which they did not awaken until late on the following morning.

The party did not leave the hut until the afternoon of this day, by



which time Ben and Tom were much strengthened by their rest and refreshments.

Mr. Button had provided each of the three boys with shoes and a change of clothing, together with ammunition and a good rifle, while Jan was furnished with a long spear.

The two Hindoo guides moved on ahead while the showman's other dusky assistants followed in the rear, carrying ropes, bamboo-poles and other luggage.

Just before sundown the party paused in a deep valley to partake of supper.

The canned meats, curry, etc., were keenly relished.

"We are now not more than thirty miles from Mangalore," remarked the showman. "It could be seen on the top of the cliff, on our right."

"Come, Tom," said Ben, much agitated. "I doubt not that, from the cliff, we can see the very hill from which Eva so strangely disappeared more than five years ago."

Followed by his brother, he climbed the ascent.

There was a mass of shrubbery on top of it, which hid the boys from the gaze of the party below.

"Ay, there's the very hill," said Ben, as he pointed it out to his brother.

He had climbed a rock, and Tom stood about four feet below him near the base of this rock, looking in the indicated direction.

All at once, as he looked toward the hill, he heard a slight, rustling noise near him.

He turned toward the noise, and beheld, on top of the rock, a perpendicular object, which had evidently just emerged from a hole, half hidden by some green leaves.

It was a snake, about four feet high, and was not more than three yards from and behind his brother.

Its tail was in the form of a ring; otherwise it stood nearly erect, with its head bent forward.

Along the back of the neck, expanding in a fan-like shape, was a fleshy hood, and there were yellow rings about the keen, little eyes, which were turned toward Ben.

Meanwhile the tongue, darting in and out, added to the creature's hideous appearance.

"Look out, Ben!" shrieked Tom, who had heard enough about this venomous snake to know that it was a cobra, and that it was in the act of springing at, and striking his brother.

He aimed his rifle at the creature, but the weapon hung fire.

The next moment the cobra made the spring, but Tom, warned by his brother, jumped from the rock just in time to avoid the snake.

Again the latter coiled its tail for another spring.

Ben fired at it but missed.

Tom ran up and aimed a blow at it with the butt of his rifle, for he had heard that it was easy to kill a cobra by breaking its back.

But being below the creature he could not hit it in the right spot.

The cobra's yellow-ringed eyes seemed to flash with rage.

It would the next moment have sprung at Tom, but for an unexpected intervention.

An old but active-looking man—a Hindoo—suddenly appeared from a cave on the other side of the rock concealed by the shrubbery, and reaching up caught the serpent about the neck. He was a hideous-looking man, wearing a huge sort of a turban, and having folds of dirty cloth about his body, and his cunning leer as he seized the snake added to his repulsive expression.

"Hi, boys, look!" he said, fearlessly holding it up before them. "Sikhi, the great magician, is not afraid even of the cobra whose bite is death!"

The snake wriggled wildly to and fro, but the Hindoo now commenced to make a musical noise with his mouth, like that of a flute.

In a few seconds the cobra hung motionless, and its eyes seemed to soften.

The boys had heard enough of the wonderful feats of the jugglers of India not to be surprised at the power the magician exerted over the serpent.

It was the name he had given himself which had most excited their interest.

"Sikhi!" cried Ben, excitedly, "that is the name of the magician who stole Eva!"

"Ay, and this must be the person!" cried Tom.

"Sikhi foretells events," said the old man. "He knows that you are the brothers of the girl, and are looking for her."

"Where is she? What have you done with her?" cried Ben.

"How knows the boy that his sister lives?" inquired the old man.

"If not, you are the same as her murderer. You carried her off!" cried Ben, fiercely.

"Tell us if she is dead or alive," said Tom.

"Sikhi have nothing to say," coolly answered the magician, as he swung the dangling snake to and fro.

"What! You will not answer us? We will force you to answer. You are our prisoner, and we will have you seized and punished if you refuse!" cried Ben.

"The great magician is not afraid. He has many hiding-places in the mountains where the 'laws' could not reach him."

"I will take the law into my own hands," said Ben, thinking to intimidate the old man. "Answer my question, or I fire!"

And he leveled his rifle, which he had reloaded, straight at the head of the Hindoo.

The latter stepped back a couple of paces into the shrubbery, meanwhile uttering a shrill laugh.

"Quick! before I fire!" repeated Ben, fiercely.

But he spoke to the empty air.

The magician had vanished as suddenly as if he had melted away.

Ben gave a cry of blended astonishment and despair.

"He is gone, Tom! he is gone!" he said, dropping the butt of his rifle to the ground.

"You were too hasty, Ben! God knows if we will ever see him again!"

The two ran to the shrubbery and searched it carefully, but they saw no sign of the magician.

"What can have become of him?" cried Ben. "It is dreadful, this losing sight of him just as we seemed in the way of learning something about Eva."

As he spoke he heard a cry of surprise from Tom.

He had turned, and there stood the magician on the spot which he and his brother had lately quitted, still holding the serpent by the neck.

A sardonic smile was upon the man's dark face.

"Sikhi told you he had nothing to say, and it was true. He has nothing to say except for gold. For ten gold rupees you shall learn whether the girl be alive or dead."

"Here, take the money and tell us," said Tom, handing him the amount, which he procured from the belt about his waist.

"It is American money," said the magician, looking at the gold, "but that matters not. And now listen to the words of Sikhi. Your sister had the fever a year ago, but Sikhi cured her, and she was well. A few weeks ago she was bitten by the same kind of serpent Sikhi now holds—by a cobra."

Ben and Tom gave a cry of dismay.

"The bite of the cobra is death," said Tom.

The magician smiled.

"Yes, it is death; but see!" he cried.

So saying, he loosened his grasp of the cobra, and held it close to his face.

To the horror of the boys, they saw the serpent bury its fangs deep in his cheek.

"He is lost!" cried Ben to Tom. "He will die, and then we may learn nothing more of Eva!"

The magician now dropped the cobra into a small leather bag which he carried upon his arm, and then fastened the bag together with the clasps at the top.

Meanwhile, the two little holes left by the fangs of the cobra upon the old man's cheek were changing from a red to a livid hue.

Already his heavy eyelids were drooping from the drowsy feeling which always follows the bite of a cobra, and which merges into the sleep from which there is no awakening.

But Sikhi now produced from his pocket something resembling a bean-pod, and fastened it to the wound.

A moment later his eyes brightened, and he seemed as well as ever.

He then made a salaam to the boys and disappeared in the shrubbery.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### LOST.

"We must not let him go until he tells us more about Eva!" cried Ben, running toward the place where the old man had vanished.

But they searched for him in vain.

"How strange," said Tom. "It looks as if he had the power of melting away in air."

"Ay, it looks so, but depend upon it there is some secret hollow in the cliff into which he crawls, but which is hidden from our gaze."

After a long search, which was ended by the darkness, the boys returned to the party awaiting them below.

"We have made an acquisition since your leaving us," said Mr. Button. "An old man came here with a cobra in a bag, and I bought it of him for two gold rupees."

"It must have been Sikhi, the magician!" cried Ben.

"Hah, if I had only known this!" said Button, when Tom had described his meeting with the man on the cliff. "All our Hindoo assistance, together with Jan, were off yonder by the stream at the time. Depend upon it, your sister is alive, and we will soon have her with us. The magician's game is to give you but little at a time in the way of information, so as to whet your appetite, and induce you to pay a good round sum for the girl."

"The old villain!" said Tom.

"Yes, he is that, but the only way to have the girl restored to you is to pay him what he asks. As to forcing him to surrender her, that will not be successful. He has thousands of hiding-places, and could easily elude the authorities. If cornered I believe he would be bad enough to put the poor child to death."

"But he says she was bitten by a cobra. She may be dead now."

"Don't you believe it. If he could cure himself of the cobra's bite why could he not also cure your sister?"

"But all doctors say that there is no cure for a person bitten by a cobra," cried Ben.

"Yes, I know that, but you may be sure that the Hindoo jugglers and magicians have some antidote for the poison, which they will not make known."

"Oh, Tom," said Ben, feeling very hopeful, as he and his brother sat apart from the others, "it will be the happiest moment of my life



when I find Eva. The cloud which has rested on my mind ever since I lost her will at last be lifted."

"I am confident we will find her," said Tom.

Several hours later the party were again on their way, one of the dusky attendants carrying the bag containing the cobra.

They had not proceeded far among the darkly-wooded mountains when they heard, only a short distance off, the peculiar moaning and wailing of a hyena.

They cautiously advanced in the direction of the noise.

Jan had crept swiftly ahead of the others.

Very soon he returned.

"Me see hyena. Him in cave," said the coolie.

"Now, then, boys, we must have that animal," said Button.

Five of the Hindoos, two of them carrying the bamboo-poles, quickly followed close upon the heels of Jan, who led the way.

They presently arrived near the entrance of the cave.

There they stood for a moment, gazing at the large blue eyes of the beast, visible through the gloom of the cavern.

Then, all at once, every torch that was carried by the party was lighted and held so that the gleam flashed directly into the rocky recess.

The sudden strong light flaring before the animal's eyes had the desired effect.

It seemed to stupefy the creature—to render him almost unconscious.

Four of the dusky attendants then boldly entered the cave and fastened a rope about the hyena's neck.

The stupid, unresisting animal was dragged from the cavern.

His mouth, with its great, sharp fangs, was then fearlessly muzzled, and, with four of the Hindoos keeping hold of the rope, he was driven along by the repeated blows and applications of the keen lances to his body.

Button presently halted.

"We have obtained from this part of the country the wild animals we want," he said to Ben, "and we will now devote ourselves to another task—that of finding your sister."

"Glad enough I am to hear that!" cried the delighted youth.

Button soon made his arrangements.

Eight of the party, in charge of Romer, the assistant showman, were directed to make their way to Mangalore with the hyena and the cobra, and ship them aboard the *Gladiator*.

Button and those with him would, meanwhile, commence their search for Ben's sister.

"We will rest where we are for the night," said the showman, after his eight assistants had gone. "Probably we will be visited by the old magician in the morning."

Blankets which the party had with them were spread.

Tom and his brother lay down side by side, but it was long ere the latter could sleep.

At last he fell into a restless slumber, from which he awoke an hour later.

He arose, and passing the sleeping party as well as the two Hindoos, who, carrying their lances, were pacing to and fro on watch, he walked thoughtfully on, baring his brow to the cool evening air.

He had reached a small clearing in the forest lighted by the rays of the moon, when he beheld a figure approaching. As he drew nearer he recognized even in that dim light, the unmistakable form of the magician, Sikhi.

"Hah!" said the old man, pausing and making a salaam. "Sikhi was on his way to seek you."

"You are now ready to restore to me my sister, I hope?" said Ben.

"For ten gold rupees you shall have further news of her," said the magician.

"Wretch! you would gradually extort money from me. I see through your game. But you only lose time in this way. Name your price at once, and if you bring me the girl I will pay it."

"Fifteen rupees to begin with," answered the old man, with a hideous leer and roll of his little eyes.

"Here it is, then," said Ben, counting out from his money-belt the amount of fifteen rupees.

Sikhi clutched the money and transferred it to a pouch hanging at his girdle.

"Listen to the words of Sikhi," he then said. "He will not put off the white boy longer. His sister was bitten by a cobra. Sikhi gave her of the secret medicine, which would first make her light of head and then cure her. She was getting well, when, one day, while the magician was away, she wandered off, and he has not seen her since."

"Good God! and have you no idea what has become of her?"

"Yes, Sikhi hunted and asked questions. He learned that she was seen swimming the sea-waves, near Mangalore. But a storm and a mist came up, and the boatman who saw her could see her no more. He looked for her, but could not find her. He thinks she was drowned. The Mangalore boatmen can tell you all about it, so that you will know that Sikhi speaks the truth. The American boy will look in vain for his sister. The great magician had a vision. He saw her dragged to the bottom of the sea by a shark."

#### CHAPTER IX.

##### THE MENAGERIE SHIP.

THE old magician bowed, and turning, hurried off, soon disappearing in the shadows of the forest.

Ben, gloomy and sorrow-stricken, retraced his steps to the place he had quitted.

His brother still slept. But a few paces off, he saw the showman, sitting up and smoking a pipe.

To him he described his meeting with Sikhi, and related what he had said about Eva.

Button's countenance fell.

"You think he told the truth, then?" said Ben.

"I am afraid so. His saying that we could question some of the Mangalore boatmen would seem to prove it. Still," added Button, hopefully, "we are not sure that she was drowned. The old magician's vision, in my opinion, counts for nothing. We will make our way, as soon as possible, to Mangalore, and try to investigate this affair."

There was no sleep for Ben during the rest of the night.

The moment Tom awoke he informed him of what he had learned from Sikhi.

"Cheer up, Ben," said Tom. "You know that father taught Eva to swim when she was but four years old?"

"Yes, I know that. At six years old she could swim almost as well as I. In her light bathing suit she would skim along the waters of the Hudson river shore like a veritable mermaid."

"Well, don't you see, then, she may not have been drowned after all?"

"We will see what the boatmen have to say," answered Ben, gloomily.

Early in the morning the party started for Mangalore.

When they arrived there Button pointed out the *Gladiator*—a large, black ship, lying at anchor in the harbor, somewhat apart from the many other craft there.

There were fine houses in this seaport town, which contained a number of English residents.

Alongshore were crowds of dusky Hindoo boatmen.

"Before we go aboard the *Gladiator* we will make our inquiries concerning your sister," said Button.

They walked down to the shore and accosted a group of boatmen.

"Yes," answered one, in reply to Ben's eager questions, "we remember all about her. She tall girl, with fair hair and dark eyes. Me often see her with the great magician, Sikhi. He make her help him do trick with serpents, and so she bring him in plenty rupee. One day, only one week ago, when mist upon land and water and storm coming up, me and odders here see her come there"—pointing to a rock as he spoke projecting over the water. "She jump in water and swim off very fast. Me and odders call her, but she not answer. Then me get into boat and row after her, but she been go out of sight in the mist, and storm soon come up and me never see her again?"

"You think she was drowned?" said Button.

"Yes. If not drown, where she go? Storm was heavy one and me have to pull back to shore."

"Might not she have been picked up by some other boat?" said Tom.

"Me see no other boat. Bad time for other boat be out in storm."

"She must have been lost!" cried Ben, despairingly.

"I am afraid so," said Button.

In the faint hope, however, that she might have been picked up and taken aboard some craft in the harbor, Ben and his brother, accompanied by Jan and Mr. Button, visited every vessel there.

The captains said they had seen nothing of her, though they also had heard from the boatmen of the supposed loss of a girl in the harbor a week ago.

"You may as well give her up," said Button to Ben. "It is quite plain she was lost."

But the grief-stricken boy said he would remain in the town for a while, to still continue his search and make inquiries.

"We sail in ten days from now, if you want to go with us," said Mr. Button.

"Very well, I may be aboard by that time," replied Ben.

With his brother and Jan, he hired lodgings in a small house near the sea, while the showman, having paid off and dismissed all his dusky attendants, repaired aboard his ship to which he had been informed the captured hyena and the cobra he had sent on ahead had been transferred.

Day after day, Ben and his brother wandered hither and thither, asking questions about Eva.

At length, Jan learned from an old Hindoo living in a village, on the coast a few miles from Mangalore, that the form of a drowned girl had been washed ashore there and had been buried a few days before.

She was, however, so disfigured that he could give no description of her looks—could not tell whether she was a white girl or a native.

"Of course it was Eva!" groaned Ben.

"Jan thinks so, too," said the coolie, sadly.

"There can hardly be a doubt about it," said Tom.

"Our search, then, is ended," said Ben, in a heart-broken voice.

"We may as well sail away aboard the *Gladiator*—the only ship here at present bound for home."

That same day they boarded the vessel in a shore boat. Button met them in the gangway and said he was glad they were going home with him.

Ben turned his head aside to hide the moisture in his eyes.

"Ah, my boy, I know what you are thinking of. But you must not take the loss of your adopted sister so much to heart. Come and see my animals."

So saying, the showman led the way aft.

The menagerie ship had an unusual breadth of beam.



Lashed firmly to the deck, side by side, were several large cages and boxes.

One of the former contained the captured hyena.

In the next one was a huge tiger.

It was a large one, with a striped body and long tail.

The beast, about four and a half feet high and ten feet long, had enormous claws and fangs, and fierce, terrible eyes, that ever seemed surrounded by a lurid ring of fire.

As the boys gazed upon it, the animal crouched, as if for a spring, and uttered a terrific howl.

"A fine specimen," said Button, rubbing his hands. "We have given him the name of Royal. We captured him in Bengal, on the other side of the coast, near a tributary of the Ganges river. It took twenty men to carry him, and we had to use our heaviest purchase-tackle to hoist him aboard ship."

"How could the men carry him?" inquired Tom.

"Hal! hal! I don't mean they carried him in their arms," laughed Mr. Button. "He's no infant, I can tell you. They carried him tied to bamboo poles, back down, with his legs securely lashed."

"But how was he caught?"

"By means of a deep, concealed pit, which was dug for him. He dropped into the pit, was kept there for days without food or water, and when thus weakened, ropes with nooses were lowered, to be pulled and tautened about his body and legs. Then he was hoisted up to be still more securely bound, after which he was borne along as I have said, to a raft we had ready for him, and was towed alongside the ship."

"There is not a finer tiger to be seen," said the showman's assistant, Romer, now coming up.

Tom and Jan gazed at the tiger with interest, but Ben's far-away look denoted that he was still thinking of Eva.

But when the showman moved on to the large box with its grating at the top, next to the cage, even Ben could not help feeling interested.

The box contained a huge boa, whose enormous scaly body was covered with black and yellow spots.

The serpent was coiled in a ring, with its head elevated and its great mouth wide open.

"It is now the time when it requires food, which happens about once every four or six weeks," said Button.

"What do you feed it on?" inquired Tom.

"You see the fowl and rabbits in that bin, further aft?"

"Yes."

"Well, those are to be its usual food."

"You kill them first?"

"No. In order to keep the boa healthy, it is better that he should be allowed to do the killing himself. Sometimes we give him a goat."

Button made a sign to his assistant partner as he spoke.

Some of the sailors soon came aft, and one of the goats was dragged out of a bin to leeward and placed in the box by means of a sliding door at one side.

The door was then shut and secured.

The boa darted at the goat, which began to butt it with its horns. But the serpent, with a blow of its head, knocked it down, and then proceeded to rapidly wind its coils about the animal's body and neck.

The goat, thus rendered powerless, soon died.

Then, loosening its grasp of the body, the serpent drew the head of the goat into its mouth for the purpose of swallowing the animal whole—boa-fashion—without chewing it.

The horns, however, stuck for some moments in its mouth and throat.

Gradually, however, the goat was drawn down through the reptile's capacious throat into its stomach.

The protrusion of the serpent's body, as it now lay in a torpor, which the showman said would last for days, was horrible to witness.

"How did you capture the boa?" inquired Tom.

"By taking the box ashore at a place frequented by these serpents. A live goat was fastened in the box, the sliding door of which was left open."

"The boa crawled into the box, and, as soon as it had coiled itself about the goat, my assistant, who had been concealed near by, crept up to the box and closed the door. It was an easy capture."

In another and smaller box the boys saw the cobra, from which they had had so narrow an escape.

Near this box was the largest cage of all, containing a tame elephant, which Button said he had procured near Cape Comorin.

"My assistant here, Mr. Romer, understands the management of elephants. The name of this one is Fanchon."

"That's your name, old girl, isn't it?" called Romer, to the elephant.

Whereupon the huge animal thrust out its trunk and nodded its head with an affirmative grunt.

## CHAPTER X.

### A TERRIBLE SITUATION.

SADDED by his failure to find his adopted sister, whom he now believed to have perished, Ben sought relief in active occupation.

Captain North, of the *Gladiator*, had lost his second officer, who had been killed by falling from aloft a few months previously, and he gladly accepted Ben in his place.

The vessel left Mangalore three days after the boys boarded her.

Under full sail she headed before a fair wind to the south and westward.

"Well, Jan," said Tom, as he met the coolie, who now formed one of the crew in the waist. "Here we are home-bound aboard a good, stout ship, with a good crew of twenty men. How do you like your new shipmates? They do not seem disposed to run upon you."

"No," answered Jan. "Niwani watches over the poor coolie, and will still watch over him when awful perils again come."

Jan's solemn voice and expression surprised Tom.

"There will be no more trouble, I hope," he remarked.

"Now listen to the words of Jan," said the coolie. "There will be much trouble. The trouble commenced with the loss of diamond-eyes, your sister, and there will be more."

"What makes you think so?"

"See!" said Jan, extending an arm towards the box containing the boa. "There is the serpent that Niwani loves, and he likes not to see him made prisoner in a box, and carried away from his native shore. Niwani will punish those who carried him away, and trouble will come to us for joining the men that captured him."

"Nonsense," said Tom.

"You see," said Jan, with a solemn shake of the head, as he moved forward. "The words of Jan will come true, sure as he now go to get his dinner of salt junk, hard tack and peasoup."

Tom turned away, smiling.

He attached no credit to Jan's superstitious notions.

He knew that nearly all the natives of Hindostan worshipped the boa, and that in some places they paid it divine honors.

Hence the gloomy predictions of the coolie.

Four days out from Mangalore, the *Gladiator* picked up a boat, floating bottom upward.

Upon her stern was the name "Japan," and the brothers knew this was one of the boats which had contained the sailors of the beach-gang, who had fired and deserted the ship.

Jan at once concluded that the men had all been lost at sea, which seemed proved afterwards by some fishermen who were met off the Maldiv Islands, and who stated that, in a late storm, the skeleton forms of several seamen had been washed ashore.

"So Niwani ever punish the bad," said Jan, solemnly.

As he spoke, he glared significantly toward Button and Romer, who stood near the caged boa.

Day after day passed, and the *Gladiator* still had good weather. But, after she was a few degrees south of the line, some heavy storms were encountered.

One morning, when Ben came on deck to take his watch, he found the ship, under close-reefed topsails, driving along before a howling gale.

Even off the Cape of Good Hope he had not witnessed a heavier sea than that upon which the menagerie ship was now being tossed.

Occasionally she would roll her lee main-yard-arm almost to the surface of the water.

Then, as she righted, for an instant, away she would go, with her jib-boom pointing skyward, far up on the crest of some mountainous surge.

The tiger growled with savage displeasure, as he strove to keep his footing by fastening his claws to the floor of the cage.

The boa would now and then blink its eyes and open its mouth as it slid from side to side.

Fanchon, the elephant, grunted out her anger at being so disturbed. She would plant her great feet firmly on the floor of her cage, and twine her trunk about one of the iron bars, to prevent her enormous body from sliding every time the vessel rolled.

Presently the stewardess—a Mrs. Marle—the steward's wife, looked out of the companionway.

For some time her gaze rested compassionately and with a peculiar expression on Ben, who stood, with folded arms and sad, gloomy face, watching the masts and sails.

"You do not think there is any danger, sir?" she said, anxiously.

"I am not sure. The sky looks bad to windward. At any rate, I think we will be put off long from reaching Madagascar."

"That will be very bad," said Mrs. Marle, "as the showman is in a hurry to reach the island to procure a fresh store of meat for the feeding of the three wild beasts."

"We may all be food for the fishes, as to that matter, before a great while," muttered Ben, gloomily. "For myself I care not. The loss of that poor girl has rendered my life almost insupportable."

"Don't be so down-hearted, sir," said Mrs. Marle. "It is always darkest before day. There may yet be good news in store for you."

"What do you mean?" cried Ben, in surprise. "Good news?"

"I mean," interrupted Mrs. Marle, in some confusion, "that you might hear good news about something, and that it might soothe you for the loss of her you mourn."

"Never!" cried Ben. "Nothing can happen to console me."

Mrs. Marle said no more.

She hurried below, for a terrific tempest now was approaching from windward.

Ben had everything taken in except a close-reefed main-topsail. He battened down the hatches, and ordered a loaded twelve-pounder forward, to be carefully wrapped in tarred canvas, as the captain had directed him to be sure to keep this piece well protected.

Scarcely was this done when the gale broke forth. Shrouded in spray the ship was hurled along, with the blast screaming and thundering in her shrouds.

The showman and the captain came on deck.

Heavy seas were beginning to sweep the decks, and extra lashings were put about the cages.



Very soon every man was obliged to hold on for his life, to save himself from being washed overboard.

Great, green walls of water would dash over the vessel, engulfing her at times, so that it seemed as if she would never come right again.

The elephant, the tiger, and the boa added their din to that of the thundering waters and screaming winds.

The most horrible noises issued from their throats, as they were nearly suffocated by the deluge of water that swept over them.

An attempt had been made to enclose the cages, but the seas had washed the wooden doors overboard ere they could be shut.

All at once there was a loud, snapping sound amidships.

"Look out! The mainmast! The mainmast!" roared the captain through his trumpet.

As he spoke, the ship made a dizzying, backward lurch, on the side of a mountainous sea she was climbing.

Then there was a terrific crash as the mainmast came down.

It struck the after-deck slantingly, crushing the bins in which were the goats, rabbits and fowl, and sending these creatures overboard. It also smashed a portion of the box containing the boa.

In an instant, with a loud, hissing sort of scream, the serpent darted from the broken cage.

There was a hasty scramble on the part of the sailors to get out of his way.

It was at a time when the monster required food, and he was furious with hunger.

Tom Trailer stood directly in front of the creature, holding on to an end of the main-brace.

"Look out, there! jump, boy, jump out of the way!" roared Button.

But, in attempting to do so, Tom's feet became entangled in the rigging of the fallen mainmast.

The serpent darted toward him, and, the next moment would have been upon him, but for Jan, the coolie.

The latter sprang to the lad's side, and pulled him down upon his back.

This brought the horrid head of the monster above the boy.

It struck Jan, knocking him over.

Just then a tremendous sea swept the ship fore and aft.

It dashed Jan toward the mizzenmast, and threw the serpent back.

To save himself from being washed overboard the coolie threw out his arms and clung to the first object that came to hand.

This proved to be the scaly body of the boa, whose instinct had impelled it to twine the upper part of its form about the mast to prevent itself from being swept into the sea.

The moment the serpent felt the human arms about its body it twined its slimy coils around the boy's form.

A cry of horror rose from all the spectators.

There was Jan, held tightly in the deadly folds of the horrid monster as it hung from the mast.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE WRECK.

"NIWANI! Niwani!" screamed the terrified lad, "help the poor coolie boy! He loves your serpent though he is crushing him! It was not the coolie that made him a prisoner and brought him away from his native land."

The boy's voice sounded fainter at every word.

It seemed to the spectators that they could hear his bones crack under the terrible pressure of those vise-like coils.

Ben Trailer and the captain ran down into the cabin, to soon return, each provided with a loaded rifle.

They took aim at the serpent, but as they fired the ship rolled, and their shots went wide of the mark.

The bullets struck the already weakened backstays, and as the ship now made a furious plunge, away went the mast, crashing overboard.

"Cut away the wreck!" roared the captain.

"But the serpent still hangs to it, and still holds the coolie!" cried Ben.

"It matters not. Better the loss of one life than the lives of all hands!" replied the captain.

In fact, the ship, now held down by the wreck, must be buried in the seas and founder unless the heavy mast were cut clear.

The captain and a couple of sailors quickly cut it adrift with axes.

Then the horrified occupants of the ship saw the spar drifting off in the rack and spray, with the boa still clinging to it and retaining his hold of his intended victim.

They were finally lost to view astern.

Ere they disappeared, poor Jan, almost black in the face, was seen stretching out his arms imploringly toward the vessel.

Hours passed.

The disabled ship was hurled onward by the screaming, howling gale, with the seas madly breaking over her hull.

The cages containing the wild beasts rocked like cradles.

That of the elephant was nearly tipped over on its side at every roll of the craft.

All at once there rose a fearful cry.

Directly ahead rocks and breakers were seen, with an island beach extending some distance beyond.

The captain sprang to the wheel.

"For God's sake, men, try and loosen that foresail!" he shouted.

He put the wheel down, but the force of the wind and seas hindered the ship from coming up more than a quarter of a point.

Ben sprang forward.

"Come, boys!" he shouted. "The foresail! the foresail!"

A few men followed him, and they contrived to reach the foreyard. The sail was loosened and set.

Then the Gladiator, answering her helm a little, luffed up a quarter of a point more.

But the maneuver was attended with appalling consequences.

A tremendous wall of water, followed by many more, swept over the craft, engulfing her and holding her down, fairly on her beam ends.

For some moments it seemed as if she would never right herself.

The half suffocated men clung to ropes and belaying-pins for a while, but soon the angry, whirling waters, lifting many of them from their feet, twisted them away from their hold.

Then their jingling cries were heard as they were hurled to leeward, into the sea.

At the same time a huge object was torn from the deck, and sent flying overboard on the crest of a sea.

It was the elephant's cage, with the animal's trunk thrust far upward between the bars.

A strange, unearthly gibbering shriek broke from the monstrous beast as he was thus carried off.

Then, as the ship gradually lifted herself from the engulfing waters, those aboard of her saw the cage borne on toward the rocks.

Suddenly the showman uttered a cry of joy, as he pointed toward the rugged masses.

The cage, lifted by the crest of a mighty sea, had been thrown, as if it were a mere football, to the summit of a broad, flat rock, shelving downward, beyond.

It had been broken open by the shock, and out of it rolled the enormous form of the bellowing elephant upon the rock.

"Saved! saved! Thank God!" cried Button, with tears in his eyes.

"Ay, ay," replied the captain, impatiently. "Your elephant is safe, but my men—ten as good men as ever walked a ship's deck are lost!"

"Nor is that the worst of it," remarked Ben Trailer. "This ship is doomed! We are drifting every moment nearer to the rocks!"

"You are right. May the Lord have mercy on us!" cried the captain.

"But it seems to me that the force of the gale has abated," said Button.

"That won't help us much," replied Captain North.

In fact, the Gladiator was being rapidly borne along toward the breakers.

"Ay, we are gone!" shouted the captain. "Cut away that foremast, boys! It is only in the way now."

Men with axes backed away at the shrouds.

Another sea came and swept them overboard.

Ben then seized an ax, and, assisted by a sailor, completed the work.

The foretopmast went overboard and was cut clear of the ship.

Just then a grating sound was heard.

This continued for a few minutes.

Then there was a thump, and the dismayed hull, keeling partly over, became stationary with the exception of its reeling at every blow of the sea.

"We are fast in a sand bank. Thank God! we struck it ere reaching yonder rocks," said the captain.

"Are we saved? Oh, captain! are we saved?" cried the terrified stewardess, Mrs. Marle, from the companionway.

"If the seas do not batter us to pieces ere they go down, we are saved," answered North.

"They are going down," said Button.

This was true. As the gale abated the walls of water striking and sweeping over the wreck became less violent.

The captain now summoned his men before him that he might count them.

Only four poor fellows besides Ben, Tom, the two showmen, the captain, his first mate, the steward, and the cook answered to their names.

"Seventeen men lost!" cried the captain, sadly.

"Ah, it is too bad!" said Button. "Remember, though, that I too have had a severe loss. That boa was worth thousands of dollars to me."

"Accursed serpent! Don't forget that it was the means of my losing one of my crew—the coolie boy, Jan!" cried the captain.

"Well, I suppose I ought not to complain," said Button. "The loss of human life is, of course, worse than that of any wild animal."

As the gale continued to abate the showman watched his elephant attentively.

The animal had staggered to its feet on the rock, which was about a hundred yards from the ship, and was bellowing with might and main.

"She does not like this Robinson Crusoe business," remarked Button. "I wish I could go to her."

"When the seas go down a little more you can do so," said the captain.

"Where are we, sir? What place is this? Is there any prospect now of our getting to Madagascar? There is but a small stock of meat left, and Royal is very hungry."

In fact, the tiger, with blazing eyes, now was springing about in his cage, while the hyena uttered strange, unearthly moans.

"We are perhaps hundreds of miles to the north of Madagascar," replied the captain. "The island we see beyond these rocks is probably uninhabited—one of the chain extending to the south-west of the Seychelles."



"Could you not reach Madagascar under jury-masts?"

"Ay! that might be done could we get off this bank. But how on earth we are to get off I cannot imagine. We are too firmly wedged in it to tow the ship clear with our quarter boat—the only one which has not been stoven."

"You can get clear of the bank," said the showman, "and I will tell you how."

"How is it to be done? If you can inform me you are a better sailor than I am, and I have followed the sea going on thirty years."

"All you have to do is to get a hawser fast to the ship to yonder rock," said Button, pointing to the elevation upon which stood Fanchon. "The rock, as you can perceive, is outside of our position, that is, it is further out at sea than we are."

"Well, suppose I get a hawser there, what then?"

"Don't you see!" cried Button. "The elephant will obey my assistant, Romer, like a child? Fasten your hawser to her, and my word for it, she will tow your ship clear of this bank."

The captain started.

He seemed struck by the idea which, though a novel one, was certainly very good.

## CHAPTER XII.

### FANCHON'S ACHIEVEMENT.

FOR some minutes the captain stood thoughtfully gazing toward the elephant.

Then he said:

"It may be successful. The question is, will the rock give her walk enough to pull the ship clear?"

"I should think so. The rock shelves down gradually toward the sea. It has a length of at least one hundred yards."

"Ay, I think it can be done!" cried the captain.

Then he looked to windward.

"We are going to have more bad weather before to-morrow, and it looks squally now," he continued. "The sooner we tow the ship clear the better."

The wind continued to abate.

The seas subsided, and the ship rolled and thumped only at intervals.

"Clear away that quarter boat!" ordered the captain.

The boat was soon lowered.

A hawser, one end of which was fast to the vessel's bow, was coiled down in the boat.

Every sailor aboard, except Ben and Tom, were ordered into the boat.

Even the first mate, the cook and the steward were to take a hand at pulling.

The two showmen got into the boat after the crew were in their places on the thwarts.

"Give way!" shouted the skipper, who was at the tiller.

The boat left the ship, heading for the rock upon which was the elephant, while Tom and Ben "paid out" the hawser.

At length the boat reached the rock, and the two brothers now attentively watched the further movements of the crew.

Mrs. Marle was also an interested spectator.

Romer, the showman's assistant, spoke gently to Fanchon, the elephant, and the animal obediently knelt on its fore-legs.

With the assistance of the sailors, Romer then fastened the hawser securely about the huge back and shoulder of the beast.

Several turns were passed round her, under her breast and back of her ears.

She grunted and swung her trunk a little as if not exactly relishing this kind of treatment, but Romer patted her and used a few words which had a soothing effect.

When the rope was finally secured, it extended, at right angles, with the Gladiator's bow, toward the rock.

"All ready?" inquired Romer.

"All ready," answered the captain.

The assistant then patted Fanchon and told her to rise.

In a few moments the beast was upon her feet.

"Forward, Fanchon—march!" cried Romer, with a forward motion of his arm.

The gigantic animal grunted, gave a tug at the hawser, and began to move along the gradually sloping rock.

Presently the hawser tightened. Encouraged by Romer, the elephant strained and tugged at the rope.

At first the great ship of seven hundred tons did not budge.

But, as the elephant continued to pull, the vessel began to tremble.

Then several seas came rolling in under the counter, lifting it a little, and now Ben shouted out to the anxious watchers on the rock:

"She moves! She moves! Haul away, and she'll go clear!"

Proud of his elephant, Button took off his hat and cheered.

Slowly the great ship, as the elephant was assisted by the seas that struck her, slid along through the sunken sand-bank.

Romer encouraged Fanchon, praising her and patting her affectionately, and the huge beast moved on.

With grating keel, the Gladiator continued to slide through the sand.

At length there was a splash and the craft rolled slightly in the heaving seas.

"All clear!" shouted Ben.

The sailors on the rock gave a rousing cheer, and Fanchon, lifting her trunk, began to bellow, as if proud of her achievement.

The hawser was now unfastened from the animal and secured to

the boat, that the ship might be towed by the crew further out to sea.

But just as the men were about to enter the boat, one of those sudden squalls, common to the region, broke upon the sea.

As the gale now blew from the direction of the land, the masses of white water, leaping about some of the rocks, were sent crashing and thundering toward the elevation upon which stood the crew.

In an instant the boat turned over upon its side, was hurled against the base of the rock and dashed to fragments.

Meanwhile, the wreck was driven by the wind and seas further every moment from the rock.

When, at length, the squall subsided, the mist was so thick that the brothers could see nothing of the parties on the rock.

"Oh, what shall we do?" cried Mrs. Marle. "We are being carried further and further from our friends?"

"We can do nothing at present," answered Ben. "But if the wind changes I will try to rig a sort of jury-mast and head the ship toward the party we have left."

"Hark! Did not you hear some one calling?" said Tom.

"Ay, I thought I heard some one hailing us," answered Ben. "Can it be that there is a vessel ahead of us in the mist?"

"God grant that there may be!" said Mrs. Marle. "Then our troubles are at an end."

Ben ran to the bow and peered into the mist.

"Halloa! halloa! Ship ahoy!" came the voice again.

Ben imagined the voice sounded familiar.

"Who is that?" he called through the trumpet he now carried slung to his waist.

"Jan! Jan! It is Jan!" was the answer.

A few moments later and Ben could indistinctly make out a spar upon the water, with a form seated astraddle of it!

It was, in fact, the coolie, Jan.

The ship was soon close to him.

"Take hold of the hawser you see dangling from the bow and climb aboard!" cried Ben, "if you are strong enough."

"Yes, yes! Jan is strong enough now, though he was half killed by the boa," answered the coolie.

He seized the hawser and clambered aboard, assisted by Ben.

Gleefully did he shake hands with the brothers.

"Niwani save Jan. Boa choked by seas, let go of him. He slip off spar and leave Jan, who have life enough left to cling to topmast. But where is all the crew?" he added, glancing about him.

Ben explained.

"Me know something bad happen. Niwani like not boa being made pris'ner and taken off."

As soon as Jan had rested for a while, and partaken of some sea-biscuits on deck, Ben proceeded, with his and Tom's assistance, to rig a sort of jury-mast to the stump of the main, to which a sail was attached.

This work occupied several hours.

The young officer hoped for a change of wind, that he might head the wreck shoreward.

Presently, however, he noticed that the sky was darkening to the westward.

A violent gale finally came roaring along the sea from that direction.

The jury-mast was carried away in an instant, and sent whirling upward.

Ben then contrived to fasten some canvas to the broken foremast, and, by this, he was able to keep the ship's head to the sea.

The violence of the gale increased.

Avalanches of water poured over the wreck.

The spray flew in clouds about the dismasted hull.

The cages of the hyena and the tiger rocked and tilted, as if about to give away.

Suddenly, as a great wall of water dashed over the hull, the cobra's box and the hyena's cage were swept off into the sea.

The gurgling shriek of the beast was soon drowned in the angry waters astern.

His cage had disappeared in the mist and the rack of the storm.

Mrs. Marle now came up from the cabin.

"The cabin is flooded!" she said.

Ben went down and found himself up to his ankles in water.

"We have sprung a leak," he said. "I am afraid all this water did not come down through the companionway!"

He went on deck and met Jan.

"Water in fore-castle and hold," said the coolie. "Me been to take a look."

"Ay, the bottom planks must have been injured before we struck the sand-bank, and that made matters worse," said Ben.

As he spoke he heard Mrs. Marle calling him.

He found her in the companionway, and by her side was a slight, girlish form.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A TIGER'S DEN.

THE brown hair, the peculiar expression of the girl's sweet, oval face and dark eyes were too well remembered by Ben to be ever forgotten.

"Eva!" he cried, in astonishment. "My long lost Eva!"

"Ben! Oh! Ben—at last! at last!" cried Eva, as she sprang into his arms.

"Found! found! This way, Tom! She is found at last!" shouted Ben, almost mad with joy.



Tom ran to the companionway, and the next moment he, too, beheld his adopted sister.

"What does it mean?" he said, turning to Mrs. Marle, whose eyes were full of tears. "The drowned girl who was found must then have been some other."

"Yes," she answered. "The time has come for me to reveal Eva's presence aboard this ship. What a pity the meeting between you should take place at such a time—in this hour of peril!"

"Ay, ay!" cried Ben, sadly. "We are all in danger now. But we will hope for the best. It does not seem possible that fate will be so cruel, after Eva's being restored to me."

"But how came she here? Why did not you tell us, before?" said Tom to Mrs. Marle.

"I may have done wrong in keeping the secret so long, but I thought it was for the best," answered the stewardess. "On that day of the storm, in the harbor of Mangalore, my husband, chancing to glance toward the cabin window, was surprised to see a girl outside, clinging to a rope, that hung down from the taffrail above. He at once opened the window and helped her into the cabin. She wore the garb of a native girl, but the moment I entered the cabin, at my husband's call, I perceived that she was not a Hindoo."

"Save me! save me!" she cried, wildly. "Don't let the bad magician get Eva again! Don't let him know she is here! I have swam here all the way from the shore. Let no one know I am here, till after the ship sails! I want to go home to my father and to my brothers, Ben and Tom Trailer! Quick! hide me from the magician, from all!"

"My husband and I could perceive that she was ill—delirious. I took her into the room I alone occupy, made her lie down on my own bed, and from that time I tended her carefully. I told her to be very quiet, and I thought I could keep her being aboard the ship a secret from all until after the vessel sailed."

"At the time we took her in, the captain and officers and all the crew but two men, were ashore. She was very ill, and at one time I feared she would die. You came, and then I resolved, on learning who you were, that I would say nothing to a single soul about her being aboard, until, I saw, if she got well, as it would only make you feel worse than ever to meet her and then see her die soon after. When not in my room, I always kept it locked. No one but myself ever entered it. Eva was very quiet—made no noise, whatever, and this enabled me to keep the secret."

"In a short time after we sailed her health began to improve and she is now about well. But she knew nothing of you being aboard this ship until a few minutes ago. She may have heard your voice at times when you were in the cabin, but it's changed since you were fifteen, and it's being blended with the work of the heavy seas, the creaking of the ship hindered her from recognizing it. I had intended to wait until her paleness was entirely gone and she had become more bright and rosy, ere letting you know she was there. But the peril we are now in, and the necessity of her leaving the flooded cabin, have induced me to reveal her presence."

As Mrs. Marle concluded the ship rolled violently, and a heavy sea swept her decks.

Then there was a crash, followed by an unearthly yell, with which was blended the voice of Jan, who was at the wheel.

"Hi, halloa! cage smashed in. The tiger is loose!"

The brothers turned to see the long, striped body of the tiger bounding through the air, straight toward the companionway.

With his mouth open, revealing his red tongue and his sharp, crooked fangs, with his round eyes blazing furiously the monster presented a truly horrid spectacle.

As quick as thought Ben closed the companion-slide, and the form of Royal struck it like a thunderbolt, shaking the cabin house to its center.

A prolonged howl of rage broke from the beast as he tore at the door with his claws.

Mrs. Marle stood aghast and Eva's paleness increased.

"God help us!" cried the elder woman, "a leaky ship and a loosened tiger!"

"Could we contrive to throw some food—some meat to the monster and keep him well fed, he might not offer to harm us," said Eva.

"The ship's stores are all flooded," said Ben. "We cannot get at them as they are in the lower hold which is full of water."

"And there is nothing left in the pantry," said Mrs. Marle.

"The first thing to do is to try to kill that beast," said Ben.

"There are rifles, spears, and ammunition in the showman's room." He and Tom descending, waded through the water toward the locked door of Button's room.

But they found it barred by a huge iron water-tank, which had been driven and wedged against it, and which it would require at least half a dozen men to move.

Suddenly, the hull rolled over on its beam ends.

Then the run-hatch was burst open, and a gurgling mass of water rushed up, sweeping both boys from their feet.

The water, as they rose, was at present almost up to their necks.

"We are nearly water-logged!" cried Ben.

The door of the captain's room was open, and Ben, as he spoke, saw a rifle hanging near the berth.

He managed to seize it, and now the brothers, unable to keep their feet much longer in the flooded cabin, ascended to the companionway.

The tiger had left the companion-door, and his howl was heard forward.

"The rifle is loaded, Ben," he said, "and it has two barrels. I will go and try to make an end of the beast, Tom, while you remain here to take care of Eva and Mrs. Marle."

"No! no! brother, don't go!" pleaded Eva. "It is a Bengal tiger, you are no match for it!"

"But we are aboard a plunging, rolling ship, which will give me an advantage," said Ben. "In fact, the tiger may be washed into the sea before I reach him."

He slid back the door, sprang on deck, and then reclosed the slide. Glancing aft, Ben saw Jan still at the wheel.

He was striving to keep the vessel's head to the sea, but, now and then, she would swing off, shipping torrents of water.

Looking forward, the youth beheld the tiger upon its hind feet, with its fore-claws fastened in the windlass.

"Look out!" cried Jan, "here he comes!"

The monster, as the boy spoke, had turned his head.

With a savage growl he bounded toward Ben.

The latter took aim, and fired at the animal's head.

But a violent roll of the wreck caused the bullet to swerve.

It just grazed one of the creature's ears.

Another leap brought it within two yards of the young officer.

He discharged the other barrel of his piece.

The tiger remained unhurt. The bullet had missed him, owing to his suddenly crouching for a final spring at his enemy.

With a savage roar, he came flying through the air, his claws outstretched, his fanged jaw wide open.

Ben aimed a blow at him with the butt of his piece.

But the ship rolled, and thrown off his balance, he lost his hold of the rifle and slid to leeward.

The, long striped body of the beast came sliding with a crash against the bulwarks near him.

The roll of the vessel had thrown him over on his side when he struck the deck after his leap.

Ben flung himself over the rail, and swiftly worked himself along the outside of the ship to the fore-rigging.

Scarcely had he sprung into it, when the tiger was below him, looking up with blazing eyes.

Up went Ben to soon reach the top, with the beast scrambling up the shrouds in pursuit.

The rigging bent and shook with the weight of the animal.

Royal was no sailor, and his claws catching in the ratlines impeded his progress.

Presently they stuck fast in one of the backstays, and there he hung, roaring and howling angrily, as he swayed to the violent motions of the ship.

Jan quickly lashed the wheel amidships, and, snatching a broad-ax from the carpenter's chest, ran forward.

He partly climbed the fore-rigging, and holding to the shrouds with one hand, aimed a furious blow at the savage brute.

It would have taken effect but for the giving way of the ratline upon which he stood, this having been a little torn by the claws of the tiger.

Down went Jan, his ax flying from his grasp to the deck.

The boy saved himself from going overboard by clutching a backstay.

"To the wheel, Jan! To the wheel, before we are lost!" shouted Ben, as the ship swung off almost broadside to the seas.

The coolie obeyed.

But ere he could put down the wheel, the wreck rolled over, engulfed by an avalanche of roaring, foaming surges.

For some moments the hull thus lay, wallowing and rolling under the waters.

The tiger, with the lower part of his body immersed in the angry waves, fairly screamed with rage.

At last the hull was lifted and was rushed on as Jan kept its head to the seas.

Then the tiger, having loosened its claws, continued to climb towards the fore-top after Ben.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### ROYAL'S TERRIBLE STRATEGY.

TOM TRAILER, anxious on his brother's account, emerged from the companionway, reclosing the slide as he stepped on deck.

One glance showed him the situation of affairs.

Royal had reached the top, but, green hand as he was, he had become jammed in the lubber's hole, through which he had tried to squeeze his body.

"Quick, Tom, toss up that broad-ax to me!" shouted Ben. "The tiger is stuck fast, and now is my time!"

Tom ran forward, picked up the ax, and, steadying himself as well as he could, he flung the ax upward.

His brother caught it.

He raised it, striking full at the tiger's head.

The broad, sharp blade would have crashed through the monster's skull, and have nearly put an end to him, had not Royal, by a backward movement, slid out of the lubber's hole.

The ship plunged, and the ratlines breaking, down went the beast. Tom, who was looking up, saw the animal falling toward him, and jumped out of the way.

The tiger landed upon his feet on deck, and Tom dove for the fore-castle.

He opened the closed scuttle, but ere he could jump through it he saw the tiger making toward him.



The boy dropped to the deck with a yell, and went rolling to leeward.

Royal, unable to stop himself as he clove the air, pitched headlong through the open scuttle into the fore-castle.

"Now, Tom, quick! Fasten the scuttle-hatch over him!" cried Ben, as he descended toward the deck.

Tom sprang to the scuttle-hatch, which he hooked and barred over the opening ere the tiger could come forth.

"There, we have him fast now!" cried Ben.

"Yes, and I hope he will be drowned in the fore-castle or the hold."

"That is doubtful."

"The ship is already nearly water-logged. When I left the companionway, the water was half way up to it."

Ben looked about him.

The sky to windward was clearing, and the gale had considerably abated.

"There will not be water enough in the hold to drown the tiger," he said, "unless he should get entangled in the ropes and rigging below. The leak, I perceive, is aft under the counter. With the going down of the seas no more water will come in, and some that is already in will run out."

Ben was right as to the location of the leak.

An hour later, when the seas had subsided, he lowered himself by a rope from the taffrail, and detected the loosened timber a few feet forward of the rudder, on the starboard side.

As this timber, except in heavy weather, was above the water line, he lowered a staging, and nailed some tarred canvas over the crack.

Next he and Tom tried the pumps. But these were found to be so choked up with sand that they could not be worked.

Meanwhile, the howls of the imprisoned tiger were heard, as he ran splashing through the water in the hold.

Now and then the thud of his body could be heard against the fore-castle scuttle-hatch, which he vainly strove to force open.

Darkness began to close about the wreck.

Ben had rigged a sort of sail on the stumped foremast, but there was so much water in the hold that the wreck was hard to steer.

With some canvas, the brothers erected a sort of tent aft for Mrs. Marle and their adopted sister.

There was plenty of canvas in the roundhouse, and with this they made a comfortable couch for the two females.

Late at night they fell into a sound slumber, in spite of the noises made by the infuriated tiger.

The brothers and Jan took turns at watching.

They had lighted a lantern and fastened it to the foremast.

The wind having fallen away to a light breeze, the helm could be safely lashed amidships.

This gave each of the three a chance for obtaining sleep throughout the night.

Early in the morning the females and the boys were all awake.

Mrs. Marle and Eva came out of their shelter, and the brothers met their adopted sister with cheerful faces.

Ben scanned the sea far and near, the weather having cleared, but neither land nor sail was in sight.

"I feel sure we will be picked up," said Eva, whose paleness was gradually being replaced by a healthy color. "I trust we will see a sail before long."

"Meanwhile," said Mrs. Marle, "the question now is, what shall we do for a breakfast? I am very hungry, and I doubt not that the rest of you are also. As I said yesterday, there is no provision in the pantry, even could it be reached through the water in the cabin."

"The sea-biscuits in the hold must be pretty well soaked by now," said Ben. "But there is a box containing a few pans of preserved salmon and meats there."

"They might as well be at the bottom of the sea," remarked Mrs. Marle. "Who would venture to get them out, with that tiger in the hold?"

The brothers and Jan looked at each other.

"We will have to make the venture," said Ben. "It is the only way to get something to eat."

"And the way to get eaten," said the stewardess. "I would not advise any one to go there."

"Though we have no ammunition for the rifle," said Ben, "there is a broad-ax, and there are crowbars on deck. I will take the ax and go. We can enter by way of a door which is in the steerage bulkhead."

"Jan will go with you," said the coolie.

"And I, too," said Tom.

"No," replied Ben. "In case anything should happen, there should be one of us remaining with Eva and Mrs. Marle."

"Now is our time," said Jan. "Tiger is forward. You can hear him striking at the scuttle-hatch with head and claws."

Ben caught up the broad-ax and descended into the steerage, followed by Jan with a crowbar.

The two listened at the door in the bulkhead, but they now heard nothing.

The tiger had ceased its howling and its efforts to force open the scuttle-hatch.

The silence was broken only by the occasional swash of the water in the hold.

Ben cautiously opened the door and peered in.

It was almost dark in the hold.

The water there, as in the steerage, was more than waist deep.

The outlines of the numerous ropes, spars and casks could be seen above the surface of the water.

"The box containing the canned meat is about the center of the hold," said Ben. "Come, Jan," he added, "I don't see the tiger. He is probably still forward."

Followed by the coolie, he waded into the hold.

They moved cautiously along, and at length Ben could feel the box he sought under the water.

He and Jan had got their hands under a box, and were lifting it when suddenly the coolie dropped his end of the burden.

"What's the matter?" inquired the young second mate.

"Tiger!" hissed Jan. "See! Him got between us and the door of the steerage!"

He pointed in that direction, as he spoke, and Ben, looking there, saw the great eyes of the savage beast, gleaming like those of a fiend through the gloom.

As he looked, a growl, like smothered thunder, broke from the brute.

He was seated on a coil of rigging, above the surface of the water.

"Stand by! He is going to spring!" cried Ben, as he drew back his ax, ready for a blow.

Scarcely had he spoken, when the long, dark form of the beast clove the air toward the two boys.

Ben struck out with the ax, and felt it come in contact with the body of the animal.

By stepping quickly to one side, he had avoided the tiger.

At the same moment, Jan, who had ducked and dodged, brought his crowbar down upon the head of the tiger with tremendous force.

As quick as lightning the enraged monster turned, and flying at the coolie, caught his head in his mouth.

Again Ben lifted his ax to strike at the tiger, but, with a blow of his claw, the powerful animal knocked him down on his back, under water.

Dashing over him, the brute hurried off, dragging his victim onward.

Half stunned and bleeding, Ben rose.

He looked after the tiger, and could just make out his form as he sped forward, with the squirming, struggling coolie still in his mouth.

A moment later the tiger had disappeared in the gloom.

Ben heard the half-startled scream, followed by a horrid crunching noise.

Then he knew that the beast was making a meal of the unfortunate coolie.

The growls of the tiger, the continuation of the crunching noise and the click of the dreadful fangs, made Ben feel sick and faint.

"Poor Jan! it is all over with him!" he muttered.

Placing the ax under his arm he finally contrived to drag the box in which were the canned meats to the steerage.

As he closed the sliding door of the steerage, Tom came down to help him carry the box.

"Where is Jan?" he inquired.

"Half devoured by this time," answered Ben, sadly.

Then he described how the coolie had been dragged off by the tiger.

As soon as the box was on deck, Ben and his brothers cautiously lifted the fore hatch and looked down into the forehold.

There they witnessed a spectacle that made them shudder and quickly reclosed the hatch.

As it was opened the tiger lifted his busy jaws from the remains of Jan on a coil of rigging and turned his flaming eyes toward the boys above, at the same time uttering a threatening growl.

He was just abaft the hatchway, a little to leeward.

"What a pity we have not a couple of loaded rifles," said Tom. "It would be a good chance for a shot from here!"

"Yes, but there will be no chance for that. The water has ruined the ammunition even if we could get at it."

Having securely fastened the hatch, the brothers went aft.

The box was opened and the four occupants of the wreck sadly partook of some of the canned provisions.

Several days passed and still they were on the wreck, vainly watching for a sail.

They now had good weather, which seemed to give promise of continuing some time longer.

The tiger's dreadful howls were still heard in the hold.

The fate of Jan was a warning to the brothers not to venture there.

On the night of the fourth day after the coolie's death, Royal seemed unusually furious.

He threw himself again and again at the fore-castle scuttle-hatch, and tore at it with his claws.

Mrs. Marle and Eva were so used to the horrid noise of the beast that it did not disturb their slumber.

They lay sound asleep in their tent, while Ben also slept, not far off, on the carpenter's bench.

It was a mild night, with a good breeze, however, ruffling the sea, and the moon was shining.

Tom had climbed into the fore-top to keep a lookout, with a lighted lantern hung near him.

For some reason he felt unaccountably drowsy.

Probably it was caused by the oppressively warm air, and also by his not having slept at all on the previous night.

Ere he was aware of the fact, he had fallen into a doze, with his back against the stump of the mast.

All at once he was awakened by a sort of crash.

He started up and rubbed his eyes.

Then, as he gazed downward—he was sure he was not mistaken—he saw the terrible head of the tiger, protruding from the fore-castle



scuttle—the eyes of the beast fairly seeming aflame as he looked about him.

## CHAPTER XV.

## CONCLUSION.

TOM at once divined that the repeated powerful blows of the brute's head had at least split open the scuttle-hatch.

A warning yell broke from the boy.

"Look out, there! Into the companionway for your life! The tiger! The tiger!" he shouted.

Ben sprang to his feet and grasped the ax which he kept at his side.

He quickly roared out to the females to seek shelter in the companionway.

Royal came bounding aft, with terrible growls.

He made straight for the young officer, as if bent on having his revenge.

But it so happened that in making for the companionway, Eva stumbled over a rope which lay directly in the tiger's path.

The beast was but a few feet from her, and she knew that ere she could rise he would be upon her.

There was a tangled coil of rope near her, forming a sort of network, and into this she tried to crawl.

She got her head in, and most of her body.

At this moment, Royal came up and tried to seize her.

Ben sprang toward him, but ere he could strike him, the tiger was making off with the girl.

He had tried to take her head in his mouth, but the coil about her hindered this, and his fangs had closed over the ropes and fastened themselves in the shoulder of the loose jacket she wore.

"Great God!" said Ben. "Oh, Tom! Tom! we must save her!"

Tom, with the lantern snatched from the foremast, reached the deck just as the tiger disappeared with the girl in the fore-castle.

Ben caught a glimpse of his form as he disappeared through the opening in the fore-castle bulk-head.

Keeping on, he suddenly saw the tiger directly in front of him.

In his haste the monster had suddenly become entangled in some tarred rigging.

Still holding on to the girl, he was striving to disengage himself when Ben came up.

Nearly up to his waist in water, the youth struck at the monster's head with his ax.

But the rigging was in the way, and though the blow fell upon the tiger's head, it inflicted but a slight gash.

This, however, caused him to drop his burden, and devote his attention to his adversary.

Tom now came up and placed the lantern on a cask.

He caught hold of Eva, who was unconscious, and lifted her in his arms, clear of the coils of rope which still had remained about her.

"Take care of her, Tom, and leave the tiger to me!" shouted Ben.

The boy carried his adopted sister to the fore-castle, and thence to the scuttle, by which he found Mrs. Marle.

"Here! please see to her!" he cried, handing out the girl to the stewardess.

"Ah! God help her—is she hurt?"

"Not much, I think. The ropes protected her. They formed a perfect network about her body. But she is much bruised, and as you see senseless."

Then, having resigned her to the care of Mrs. Marle, Tom went back into the hold where he found his brother still fighting with the tiger.

The latter, still entangled in the tarred rigging, was struggling furiously to release himself.

The hard ropes were in the way of Ben's ax, but the savage brute was bleeding from several cuts on his head and neck.

Tom ran up and drove his knife into the monster's side.

Royal, feeling this new wound, roared with rage.

He whirled round and flew at Ben.

The latter had lifted his ax, but the monster struck it from his grasp, knocking it somewhere between the casks.

In another moment the youth must have met with a fate similar to the coolie's, but for Tom who now dashed the lighted lantern with all his might into the tiger's face.

The lantern was shattered to fragments, and the oil from it spattering over the monster's face took fire, half blinding him.

He plunged his head beneath the water and rolled over and over to extinguish the flames under the surface.

"Come, Ben!" cried Tom. "We had better make tracks."

The boys ran into the fore-castle and on deck.

They saw nothing of Mrs. Marle or Eva.

The former had, in fact, borne her charge into the companionway and closed the door.

"Here he comes again—after us!" cried Tom, as the savage roars of the tiger and the splash of his body through the water were heard in the fore-castle.

The alarmed brothers dodged behind the twelve-pound gun, which stood near the fore-castle.

"I have a plan," said Ben.

"This is no time for planning," replied Tom, with a rueful laugh.

"It is about the gun," rejoined Ben. "This gun is loaded. I heard the captain say so."

"That will do us no good. Hark! The tiger is coming up the steps!"

"The powder in the gun may not be dry enough for firing," said

Ben. "The piece is so well wrapped in tarred canvas that the inside may have kept dry."

As he spoke he quickly ripped off the canvas from the piece.

He had time to do this, as there was some delay in Royal's coming up.

The truth was that the blazing oil, though now extinguished, had injured his sight, and he was a little confused.

But the delay was only for a few seconds.

Then his head and shoulders emerged from the opening, and, crouching upon the edge of it, he saw the two brothers by the gun, directly before him.

A horrible spectacle did he now present.

The blazing oil had burned away his bristles and blackened the short hairs about his face.

Gashed and bleeding, his head presented a frightful spectacle.

From his gory head his eyes flashed like electric balls of fire.

He thrashed the fore-castle with his tail; then, with one terrible howl of concentrated fury, he made his fearful spring.

But, as his long, striped form clove the air, directly on a line with the muzzle of the gun, Ben pulled the lock-string of the piece.

The bursting sheet of flame struck the tiger full in the face, simultaneously with the roar of the gun.

Then there was a crash that shook the deck.

Royal had made his last leap.

The ball, entering his breast, had plowed its way through the whole length of his body. The brothers stood surveying him for a few moments. Then they looked at each other.

"I was never more frightened in my life," said Tom. "I was afraid the gun would not go off."

They now went to the companionway and opened the door. Mrs. Marle had bathed Eva's head and face with camphor and brought her to.

At sight of the brothers she gave a cry of joy.

"Are you much hurt?" inquired Ben, anxiously.

"No, only bruised, and my shoulder is a little sprained."

Then the boys informed the two females that the tiger was dead.

They left the companionway with the brothers to look at it.

Suddenly Tom pointed ahead.

"A sail!" he shouted. "A sail!"

Sure enough, there was a sail discernible in the moonlight, emerging from a slight mist half a mile off.

"Ay, ay! We are all right now!" cried Ben, joyfully. "They must have heard our gun and thought it was fired as a signal."

The vessel drew every moment nearer.

It proved to be a large ship.

A boat was lowered, and an officer presently came aboard the wreck. He informed the occupants that the ship was the Arrow, a merchant craft bound from Java to New York.

The brothers told their story, and the wrecked party were soon taken off to the Arrow, where they were kindly received by the captain, who at once allowed the females comfortable quarters in one of the rooms of the cabin.

The vessel was now headed for the group of rocks, on one of which the boys had left the showman, Buttons, and his companions.

Two days later the rock was sighted.

But there was no one there.

A huge object lay at the base of the rock.

This, when a boat was lowered and pulled up to it, proved to be the dead body of Fanchon, the elephant.

The crew, mounting to the summit of the rock, saw a party of men on the island beach beyond.

They were making signals, and the boat being finally pulled to the beach these people, as was expected, proved to be the showman, the captain of the Gladiator, and the sailors with them.

They informed their rescuers that they had swam to the island, two days after the wreck drifted away. Since then they had subsisted on coconuts and a few fish, which latter they had contrived to spear.

"Glad enough we are to be picked up and to see you again," said Captain North to the brothers.

The latter described their thrilling experiences while aboard the wreck.

Cries of joyful surprise broke from all the listeners on Ben's relating his unexpected meeting with Eva.

But when he had concluded his narration, Buttons said, mournfully:

"I am glad to see you safe, lad, and glad you have found your sister. Your killing my tiger could not be helped, but sorry enough I am to have lost my serpents and wild beasts. Even Fanchon was doomed. She slipped accidentally from the rock yonder, and falling upon her side, was pierced to death by a sharp spur."

The party were now taken aboard the ship, and Mrs. Marle was overjoyed at the meeting with her husband, the steward, restored to her safe and sound.

In due time the Arrow arrived at New York.

The brothers returned with Eva to their little house on the Hudson, and there, a year later, Eva and Ben were united in wedlock.

Mr. Buttons, the showman, preparing to set out again to obtain a supply of wild animals, found time to be present at the ceremony.

He solicited the brothers to join him as partners.

But Ben shook his head decidedly in the negative, while Tom, shrugging his shoulders, replied:

"No! No! Once is enough for me! Never again will I risk being Afloat in a Tiger's Den!"

[THE END.]



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